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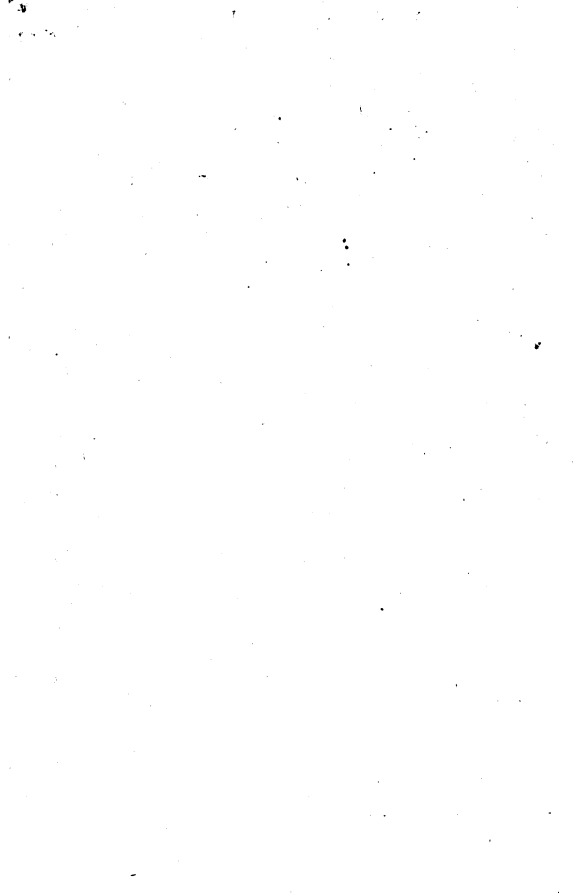
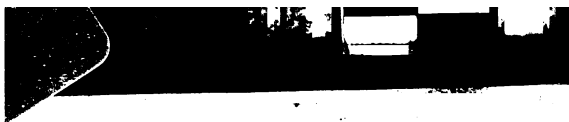
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THE COMEDY OF SENTIMENT.

A NOVEL

BY

DR. MAX NORDAU,

Author of "How Women Love," Etc., Etc.

—
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THE COMEDY OF SENTIMENT.

CHAPTER I.

GUSTAV BRUCHSTÄDT had come to the convention of German naturalists, which was held at Magdeburg, in September, 1884, and now, on the morning of the dull, rainy Sunday which preceded the opening session, stood waiting in front of the Hotel City of Prague for his intimate friend, Professor Friedrich Bärwald, who, with his wife, had agreed by letter to arrive from Berlin at this hour, and stop here. Ere long a carriage turned out of the Breiten Weg into Bärstrasse, and stopped before the hotel. Even at a distance Bruchstädt recognized his friend's long black beard, gold spectacles, and broad-brimmed slouch hat, and

waved his hand joyously. Bärwald sprang from the carriage almost before it stopped, and embraced Bruchstädt with great cordiality. Then both gentlemen turned to the hack to help the professor's wife, and Bruchstädt now noticed for the first time that the vehicle had another occupant.

"Permit me to present Professor Bruchstädt," said Bärwald. "Our charming little friend, Frau Paula Ehrwein."

Bruchstädt bowed, saying:

"I think, madam, that I have already had the honor of meeting you one evening at our friend Bärwald's."

"That is certainly not the case. Otherwise you would *know*, not *think* so."

This reply was made in a quiet, cool, unusually musical voice.

Bruchstädt now looked for the first time at the lady who so audaciously displayed her self-assurance. But she was right; he would not have forgotten even so brief a meeting. Her delicate, extremely pallid face, with the large blue eyes, slightly Roman nose, and pouting,

childlike mouth, possessed such peculiar beauty that it could not fail to attract attention among hundreds. She wore a black lace scarf, framing her brow and cheeks—an unusual head-covering for ladies in Germany, while traveling, which gave her appearance a somewhat foreign air, and therefore made it still more impressive. As the scarf was pushed a little awry, her shining, reddish—fair hair, naturally curly, and lightly covered with gold-powder, became visible.

Bruchstädt offered his arm to assist her out of the carriage, but she did not seem to notice it, and turning to Bärwald, allowed him to help her alight. Did she wish to punish the former for his thoughtless remark? He had spoken in good faith. He really thought he had seen, or heard a lady of her name mentioned, at one of the evening parties which Bärwald, since his marriage, was in the habit of giving when his friend came to Berlin, and at which the latter was always introduced to a number of girls and young married women.

The hotel servants had come out, and while

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were busied with the luggage, Bruchstädt, in a somewhat embarrassed tone:

"I ordered a room only for you and your —I did not know—"

Nor I either," replied Bärwald, smiling, "my friend did not decide until the last hour, according to her impulsive way. But we can probably be accommodated, even without a previous engagement."

Bruchstädt shook his head in dissent. "Unfortunately, there is not a single vacant room."

"Well then," said Frau Ehrwein, "we will go into the hack again and drive on. There are probably other hotels in Magdeburg."

"Everything is full," replied Bruchstädt. "I had trouble enough to get in here."

"We are provided for, I think," observed Bärwald, somewhat pointedly.

"Pardon me," her friend answered gently. "I thought we would wish to remain together."

"It doesn't matter. Don't disturb yourselves. I will look for a room elsewhere, and if none, I'll simply return to Berlin."

She turned as if to get into the hack, when Bruchstädt said:

"Permit me to give you my room, madam. It is not very elegant, but it will spare you a longer search and the separation from the Bärwalds."

"Thank you, you are very kind," replied Frau Ehrwein simply, and ordered the porter to take her trunk down from the carriage.

"But what will you do?" asked Bärwald.

"Have no anxiety on that score. An old student easily finds a shelter. But you are equipped as if you meant to take a journey round the world," he added, as he looked at the big trunks and the numerous boxes and hampers brought from the carriage.

"Almost all the luggage belongs to our friend," answered Frau Bärwald, quickly.

"I am the culprit," said Frau Ehrwein turning. "Entertainments and receptions are to be given, so I was obliged to bring some dresses."

The party entered the hotel and were shown to their rooms, while Bruchstädt informed the

waiter that he had given up his. His luggage, which he had not yet unpacked, was brought down, and he went upstairs to take leave of his friends.

"When shall I see you?" asked Bärwald.

"I'll come back at four, and then we'll remain together, if agreeable to you."

"Certainly," cried Bärwald and his wife in the same breath, holding out their hands to him. Frau Ehrwein did the same. "Your first remark was so uncomplimentary," she said, "that I would not give you the pleasure of telling you how much I had anticipated making your acquaintance. But since you have improved, I will confess that we talked of nothing but you throughout the journey."

"We gave you plenty of puffing," cried Bärwald merrily.

"Very unwise, when it can be so speedily contradicted," replied Bruchstädt, glancing at Frau Ehrwein.

"No, no," she said smiling, "I won't grant you the pleasure of contradicting you. I will only say, 'Farewell till we meet again!'" Her

tone had become much warmer than before, and she gave him her hand a second time, looking him full in the face with her large eyes.

Bruchstädt reached the hotel in the afternoon a little before the hour appointed, and found no one except Frau Bärwald, who was waiting for him in the reading-room. "Friedrich will come presently," she said, "he has been calling on his colleagues for two hours."

"I know it," answered Bruchstädt. "I have done the same thing, and we even met twice at the same Privy Councillors'."

"And meanwhile I must sit alone in the room," replied Frau Bärwald, pouting. "I can choose between knitting or writing a story for the women's periodicals. That's the consequence of being the dull wife of a professor, instead of as lively as, for instance, Frau Ehrwein. How do you like her?"

The whole introduction had evidently been made for the sole purpose of leading the way to this question.

"Oh! I have seen her only so short a time," replied Bruchstädt warily.

"Let us drop diplomacy. So out with it: what do you think of Frau Ehrwein?"

"But why——"

"Simply because I should like to know whether she turned your head at once, like all the other men."

"Is it really so bad?"

"You haven't answered me yet."

"Well then; Frau Ehrwein is certainly a very beautiful woman."

"At any rate a very striking one in her appearance; that isn't to be denied. But is she attractive to you?"

"How should I have formed an opinion, when I have scarcely talked with her a minute?"

"Fol de rol! You want to evade me. An impression is received in an instant. And, since you positively won't answer, I really believe that you, too, are in love with the lady."

"No," said Bruchstädt, smiling. "I don't move so fast. To be perfectly frank, I found her character a trifle ingenuously egotistical. Or perhaps she is only spoiled."

"At last," cried Frau Bärwald, eagerly. "I think her not only a trifle, but unbearably in love with herself."

"So she is not your friend?"

"Bruchstädt, you cannot seriously believe that two young women, under the circumstances existing, can be friends."

"Yet you travel with her?"

"What of that? The woman asked to be taken, and Friedrich instantly consented. You know how he is. He considers her very clever, and that is true. He says she stimulates him, that it is refreshing to chat a little while with her. She is so free, so independent in her ideas. I can readily believe it. She is indifferent to everything. People like us must stick to custom and usage, so we are commonplace, uninteresting, tiresome. But if a woman behaves scandalously, she suddenly becomes quite different—she is original and entertaining. We might be so, too, if we desired to please other men rather than our husbands."

She was evidently glad that she could pour out her heart!

"Does Friedrich know your opinion of the lady?"

"He should divine it," cried Frau Bärwald, "he should feel it. But I cannot tell him. He would think that I was jealous and laugh at me. I really am not jealous. I know what Friedrich is. Only it vexes me when I see how easily even clever men allow themselves to be deluded by a woman's most transparent wiles."

"But who is Frau Ehrwein? And where is Herr Ehrwein, of whom you have not yet said a word?"

"Yes—nor can I give you any definite information. I won't repeat what is said. Who can distinguish truth from slander in the tattle of evil tongues? What she herself says, is this: she was born and educated in Riga as the daughter of a German Consul, and married a lawyer there, with whom she lived several years in St. Petersburg; he was a drunkard and abused her, so she at last obtained a divorce from him. During the past year, she has been in Berlin with her two little children—for she

has two little children. She visits in very good society, though not where she would meet people from St. Petersburg."

"How did she come in your way?"

"We met her at Professor Burg's. How she made his acquaintance, I don't know. But his house is not much more difficult of access than a Vienna café. What queer people are often seen there! Well, you know the clever old cynic. The woman's abominable speeches delight him, and he looks at her with swimming eyes when she says something that fairly takes your breath away. Professor Burg fathers, mothers, or uncles her—whichever you please. He is her prop in society. Friedrich chatted with her several times at the Burgs' and was also captivated by her audacity. After a short acquaintance he invited her to our house, and the woman came at once without waiting for me to second the proposal. I did not like her. But finally—I have no grown daughters, and as she amuses Friedrich, I made no objection. Yet, willing as I am to please him, it can't go on much longer. She is beginning

affairs with all our friends—well, I'll say no more."

"Are not you a little severe, my dear friend? It isn't always the fault of a pretty, piquante woman that men pay court to her, and there is not necessarily any harm in it."

"Friedrich says so too. But I can't regard the matter as so innocent."

At that moment Bärwald hastily entered, apologizing for being a little late.

"Never mind," replied Bruchstädt, "the time has passed quickly with us. We have been talking."

"And," cried Bärwald, with a keen glance at his wife, which brought the color into her face, "about Frau Ehrwein. Of course. You know, my friend, in order to obtain the actual facts, you must extract the cubic root from everything that Hedwig has told you."

"Even from the good?" asked Bruchstädt smiling.

"Why—not much of that was presented."

"*Extract the cubic root!* That's rather a tiresome operation for any one who is not, like

no you, a professional mathematician. It will be a considerably shorter process, if you simply tell me the unit."

"Well, Frau Ehrwein is a clever and somewhat peculiar woman, who was unfortunate in her marriage. Her conduct in Berlin is perhaps a little imprudent, at least for our prudish notions. But I don't believe that there is anything seriously wrong about her."

"Are we going to stay here?" asked Frau Bärwald, somewhat impatiently.

"Suppose we visit the Friedrich-Wilhelms-garten," suggested Bruchstädt. "The grounds are pretty. And it has cleared up."

"Didn't you agree to wait here for Frau Ehrwein?" asked Bärwald, turning to his wife.

"Don't worry about that," she answered quickly. "She got into a cab with Dr. Jürgensen directly after dinner, that he might show her Magdeburg."

"In—de—ed!" said Bärwald, smiling.

"She made Jürgensen's acquaintance for the *first time to-day* at the table d'hôte," the wife added, turning to Bruchstädt. "Now she

is driving around the city with him. At least the lady does not allow herself to be disturbed by our prudish notions."

"We will leave a message with the porter to tell her where we have gone, at any rate," said Bärwald.

On the way he again mentioned Frau Ehrenwein, and, in reply to a question from Bruchstädt, said that she had begun to paint and seemed to be talented.

"She certainly doesn't lack industry," observed his wife; "last week she spent almost every day, from early morning until late at night, with her teacher, the handsome Kornemann. If she doesn't make progress——"

"Hedwig, you are unkind again," said the professor, with a reproving glance.

"Unkind? When I simply mention facts, without comment? Perhaps it will also be unkind, if I tell our friend that in July she went to Sassnitz with Kornemann, and behaved in such a way at the hotel, and on the beach, that the people at the watering-place never called the pair anything except 'the turtle-doves.'"

“That’s foolish watering-place gossip. However, I’ll admit that the trip was a piece of imprudence. A woman in her position should be doubly cautious. I preach that enough to her. But she has a sufficient answer. ‘I care nothing about gossip,’ she says. ‘I won’t sacrifice a single pleasant moment for the sake of tattling women. They will do nothing for me. And I am perfectly sure of myself. I run no risk.’ I believe her. Beneath the apparent carelessness of her capricious little head is hidden cool judgment and an iron will.”

After having heard all this, Bruchstädt now remarked: “I will tell you something; the woman doesn’t interest me in the least.”

Frau Bärwald gratefully pressed the arm on which she leaned.

The Friedrich-Wilhelmsgarten was full of naturalists, and it was not until after they had exchanged numerous greetings, handshakings, and introductions, that they finally reached a vacant table.

They had been seated only a short time when Frau Ehrwein appeared at the entrance, cast

a searching glance over the terrace, and took a few hesitating steps between the rows of tables. Bärwald noticed her first, and rose. She saw him instantly and came swiftly forward, smiling even when at a distance. Her delicate figure, of middle height, was buttoned into a close-fitting Scotch-plaid jacket, with numerous pilgrim collars; and she wore on her head a little dark bead bonnet, *à la* Marie Stuart, which admirably set off her shining hair and pale face.

A tall, handsome, fair-haired man, at whom she did not glance back even once, followed her somewhat diffidently. On reaching the table where her friends sat, she shook hands with them all cordially, then turning to her companion, said curtly, with a slight bend of the head:

"Many thanks for the afternoon, Herr Dr. Jürgensen, and *au revoir*."

The blond giant seemed somewhat disconcerted by this abrupt dismissal, but as the table would accommodate only four persons, and no one invited him to remain, he took

leave in a somewhat embarrassed, awkward manner.

"Well, have you seen Magdeburg?" asked Bärwald, when she had taken her place beside him and opposite to Bruchstädt.

"Yes. I think I have 'done' the city. And you, Frau Bärwald, what have you accomplished?"

"I've been talking with Bruchstädt."

"You have chosen the better part," replied Frau Ehrwein, glancing at him.

Bruchstädt contented himself with acknowledging the extremely broad compliment by a bow, while Bärwald remarked: "You might have had it, too. But you preferred Jürgensen."

"Pardon me. Professor Bruchstädt was not there, Jürgensen was. I preferred what I could get."

"And now," said Bärwald, smiling, "since the Moor has done his work——"

"He can go," added Frau Ehrwein. "Certainly. What he could offer, namely, his company on a tour of investigation, he did, 2

now I have finished with the gentleman. So each performs his part. He his, when he serves me according to his ability and my needs; I mine, when I accept his services."

Bruchstädt was secretly indignant. "You don't appear to favor the equal rights of the sexes, madam," he said, somewhat coldly.

"Why should I!" she cried gayly. "We are certainly far better off with our privileges."

"Yet I'll wager that you would unhesitatingly exchange your favored sex for my outlawed one."

"You would lose your wager, my dear Professor. I am glad I am a woman, and, if I were not one, would wish to be."

"Few ladies say so."

"Because they don't express their own feelings, but those of vain men. When men consider themselves better and stronger than we, it provokes me, but not nearly as much as it amuses me when they appear to compassionate us poor, feeble creatures. The pity is wholly unnecessary, my proud lords of creation. That

we are handsomer than you, you sensibly admit——”

“I by no means admit it, madam,” interrupted Bruchstädt. “You are undoubtedly attractive to us men, but such an opinion is certainly not objective. A being capable of judgment, who was not a human creature, and could regard our species as impartially as we would look at a pack of hounds or a herd of cattle, would infallibly find the male of our species handsomer than the female.”

“Very true,” Bärwald assented. “The fact that the male is handsomer than the female extends throughout the whole animal world.”

“At least, through the higher ranks,” interposed Bruchstädt.

“You have nothing to say on this subject, Professor Bärwald,” cried Frau Ehrwein. “it doesn’t come within the sphere of a physicist. You, as a zoologist,” she turned to Bruchstädt, “can claim a prior hearing. But your comparative anatomy will leave you in the lurch, when the point to be decided is whether we are

superior to you or not. We have more real power in our little finger—”

“In your rosy little finger,” said Bruchstädt sarcastically.

“That was another sensible remark. Very true—in our rosy little finger than you have in your whole clumsy bodies. We beckon, and you obey. If your arrogance seeks to rebel against our authority, we have allies in your own hearts which instantly disarm you and lay you as slaves at our feet.”

“That may be true, madam, but were I in your place, I would not pride myself on these allies. They are the base, animal instincts in us.”

“Stop! there you betake yourself to your scientific false path again. The true woman, who is entitled to be mistress of the world, does not refuse to let even the instincts which you, as a zoologist, should be the last to scorn, fight in her behalf. But when, by their aid, she has conquered, she dismisses this troop from *her service*; she does not need them to *maintain her mastery*. That, my arrogant profes-

ser, is woman's real triumph. When you have satiated your desires, you must suddenly find at your side no longer the tool of your sensual pleasures, but a clever, stimulating human being. Woman must possess the capacity to be an attractive soul, after she has been an alluring body."

Hitherto Frau Bärwald had listened silently, though with increasing horror, occupying herself with her cakes and coffee. But now she could restrain herself no longer. "Frau Ehrenwein! what subjects are you discussing? it is shocking."

"How? We are at a convention of naturalists, and certainly natural things **may be mentioned.**"

"Very well. But in that case I earnestly beg that we may cling to the mathematical-physical, rather than to the zoological-anatomical division."

"Or still better," said Bärwald, soothingly, "to the *subdivision* of the history of science and biography of scholars. Tell us how you *like Brussels*; how you are living there; :

short, everything that you have not written in your rare letters."

Bruchstädt obeyed the request. Life in Brussels was very pleasant; people readily accustomed themselves to slight deviations from German manners; he had had a cordial welcome from his colleagues and the students at the free university; on the whole he felt very well satisfied.

"Do you find no difficulty in delivering your lectures in French, old fellow?"

At first, they had naturally given him some trouble; but as he had taken great pains and been very industrious, now, at the end of a year, it was perfectly easy.

"I should be so delighted to hear you lecture in French," cried Frau Ehrwein.

"For that purpose you would be obliged to go to Brussels, and that, probably, would scarcely be worth while."

"You won't need to tell me that twice, my dear Professor."

"Yes," Bärwald chimed in, "take care. You *ust not* invite her to Brussels, for this little

lady is quite capable of instantly taking you at your word.

Frau Ehrwein shook her finger at him, and Frau Bärwald, probably to give the light craft of conversation a different direction by a slight turn of the helm, said to Bruchstädt:

"Perhaps you were wrong, after all, in going to Brussels. I fear you are permanently lost to German science."

"The natural sciences are not national, it is true, yet I should, of course, have preferred to stay in Germany. But what was I to do? It isn't exactly cheerful to spend eight years in Bonn as a private tutor, and perhaps wait ten years more before I became an unpaid professor extraordinary. I should like to see the man who, under these circumstances, would have refused the call to Brussels; especially if he were not rich, and had duties to fulfil toward an aged mother."

"You needn't defend yourself, my dear boy," observed Bärwald. "A call to a foreign country, especially at the age of thirty-one, is, under any circumstances, an honor to a German tutor."

I am even confident that you will reach the chair of a German professor more quickly by way of Brussels than via Bonn."

While chatting thus for a time, it had grown dark and chilly upon the terrace, and Bärwald suggested going, as they were still to attend a meeting of their colleagues. They all rose, and Frau Ehrwein took a step toward Bruchstädt, but Frau Bärwald, who had sat beside him at the table, anticipated her and took his arm. When she had secured him, she let her husband lead the way with Frau Ehrwein, and followed at a short distance with Bruchstädt.

"You really are not jealous," the latter could not refrain from saying.

"I am sure of Friedrich, I repeat, but I am not of you."

"Oh!"

"No, in all seriousness. The woman is evidently making a dead set at you, so I feel a little uneasy."

"Don't be anxious on my account, my dear friend. There is really no danger. Even if it were so, I am doubly warned—once by you,

and a second time by Frau Ehrwein herself through her fine theory of woman's right of sovereignty. Besides, I don't believe that I particularly interest her."

"You grown-up child! Don't you see that she is doing everything in her power to attract your attention, and occupy your thoughts? True, this is partly our fault. Your handsome likeness is in two or three places in our drawing-room, and we talk so much about you, your hatred of women——"

"Hatred of women! How can you say so!"

"Why, surely you know what I mean: you have no exalted opinion of us, and, at any rate hitherto, have been armed against the whole feminine sex. I am certain that she came to Magdeburg principally on your account. She will make every effort to harness you to her triumphal chariot."

"I'm not very well adapted for the part of a draught animal."

"So much the better. Nevertheless, be on your guard."

They had reached the hotel; Bärwald accom-

panied his wife to their room, but Frau Ehrwein went to the porter and asked if anything had come for her. A letter from Berlin had arrived. She took it and approached Bruchstädt, who stood in the corridor, waiting for his friend.

"From my children," she said, "who are required to write to me twice a day. My oldest boy can make very good letters, if his teacher helps him."

Bruchstädt bowed silently.

"There. Now good-by until to-morrow," she added, holding out her hand and pressing his warmly. At the first step of the stairs, to which he accompanied her, she turned slightly, saying quickly: "Our friends evidently do not wish us to become better acquainted. But we shall."

When Bärwald came down, he found Bruchstädt lost in thought.

CHAPTER II.

THE opening session, at which Bruchstädt was assigned the honor of an address, took place the next morning. His work upon the development of the nervous system in the animal kingdom excited enthusiastic applause. While reading, he wondered whether Frau Ehrwein was among the listeners. She was not present at the commencement of the session, and his short-sightedness prevented his perceiving whether she had come since. He saw her for the first time that day on board of the little pleasure-boat, on which the naturalists were invited to take an excursion down the Elbe. On this occasion she wore an otter jacket and a little cap of the same velvet-soft fur. As he stepped on the vessel's deck she hastened toward him, held out both hands, and said. "*Many, many congratulations on your success to-day. How well you read! And how*

to a group on the deck; where a noisy movement of gentlemen hastily starting up, a zealous dragging forward of camp-chairs, and a closer drawing together of the circle sufficiently revealed to the distant onlooker how welcome was her arrival. Bruchstädt stood still a moment in bewilderment. What a remarkably whimsical creature! Just now so gracious, and immediately after, almost without cause, really insultingly rude. How was any one to understand her? Then it suddenly came over him like an illumination that this was evidently a method; her coquetry conducted its career of conquest on this plan; first she surrounded the chosen victim with warmth and promise, then she excited and bewildered him with an unexpected dash of cold water; first she lured the hand to catch her, then slipped away with mockery and scorn, when it fancied she was in its grasp. These were not bad tactics, but they required great skill. If they were not to be an absurd failure, it must be ascertained that the attraction had acted *sufficiently to make the repulse keenly felt.* For

if the lure had produced no effect, the rude rebuff could only seem a violation of good taste. This was emphatically his own case.

He closed his train of thought with a shrug of the shoulders, and the resolve to trouble himself no farther about the lady, and then began to look for the Bärwalds. Meanwhile the boat had left the shore, and steamed slowly into the middle of the river. A second followed in its wake. If only his friends were not on the other vessel! No. There sat Frau Bärwald leaning against the railing, gazing at the changing scenery of the bank, while her husband stood before her, chatting with some colleagues. The seat on the bench beside her was vacant, and Bruchstädt accepted her invitation to sit down. They talked for some time about his lecture, the somewhat monotonous landscape, the people on board, the acquaintances which had been made or renewed, until, after a while, the lady asked:

"Among others, haven't you seen Frau Ehrwein?"

"Yes," he answered, smiling; "I have seen and spoken to her," then after a brief pause, he added, "I've even had a little affair with her."

"You see!" cried Frau Bärwald eagerly; "you must tell me about it."

"Oh, it really isn't worth while, but if you wish——"

At that moment he felt some one slip softly down upon the unoccupied end of the bench at his side, which was scarcely large enough to afford room for a seat. He instinctively moved up a little and turned. Frau Ehrwein sat there, gazing quietly at him. There was a gentle expression in her eyes, which might be interpreted as mild reproach and submission. He started up in surprise to make way for her, and thus enabled Frau Bärwald to see her. The two ladies nodded to each other, then Frau Ehrwein said: "Pray don't disturb yourself, Professor; there is room for us all. Unless you avoid my vicinity."

"*You don't really believe that,*" replied Bruchstädt, resuming his seat.

"You do what you can to make me," she answered, in a subdued voice.

Frau Bärwald, who noticed that Frau Ehrwein was beginning to whisper, turned to her husband's group and mingled in their conversation.

As Bruchstädt did not contradict her former remark quickly enough, Frau Ehrwein added:

"Tell me, why do you hate me?"

"How can you believe such a thing?"

"You compel me to do so. I feel so attracted toward you—I let you see it so awkwardly—and you—you haven't spoken a single kind word. You haven't yet addressed ten consecutive ones to me. You are so coldly repellent——"

Her beautiful blue eyes were fixed upon him as she spoke. He grew confused, and could make no answer except: "You must not think so. That is my way. I am somewhat clumsy——"

"No, no! I know better. The Bärwalds have raved about you to me often enough, to!

me what a peerless talker you were, and how you bewitch every one, if you choose. Only you don't care to please me. Or do you think that indifference attracts me more certainly than zealous effort?"

"I'll mend my manners, I promise you. Henceforth I will pay court to you."

"For heaven's sake! anything but that. The makers of pretty speeches over yonder provide flattery enough. You are too good for it."

"Then what shall I do to please you?"

"Oh, I don't ask much. Only be a little nice to me. Be my friend." She held out her little hand, somewhat too tightly gloved, which he took hesitatingly, and only held lightly in his clasp a moment because he noticed that Bärwald had been watching them some time. The latter now approached, asking gayly: "What sort of contract have you just closed with friend Bruchstädt?"

"Oh, how inquisitive you are!" she replied in the same tone. "It was no contract, but a *treaty of peace*."

"Indeed? Has there been a war between you?"

"I was the peace-breaker. I have been rude. But Professor Bruchstädt is indulgent and has forgiven me."

Her freedom from embarrassment, her composure, and her adroitness in all situations, amused Bruchstädt. For the first time, he said to himself that she was an unusual woman. Perhaps at the moment he might also have told her so, but there was no opportunity. Frau Ehrwein had just been drawn into the general conversation of the circle, and during the whole trip, both were so surrounded that the renewal of any private talk was impossible.

At the landing she was forced away from him a long time by the throng of passengers leaving the boat, and Frau Bärwald took advantage of the opportunity to ask: "Well? And your affair?"

"What affair?"

"The one you were going to tell me about just now. With Frau Ehrwein."

"Oh, yes. No. It was nothing. An incorrect remark, which I misinterpreted. It really isn't worth while to go back to it."

Frau Bärwald persisted no farther. A reception was given in the Town Hall that evening. Frau Ehrwein appeared in a toilette which, among the naturalists' wives, most of whom came from country towns, attracted attention and almost roused indignation. She wore a ruby silk dress, cut low in the front and the back, and trimmed with gold and pearl embroidery and cream-colored lace; a necklace of Egyptian scarabei set in gold, a ruby ornament in the form of the Egyptian winged disk of the sun in her gold-powdered hair; pale yellow, gold-embroidered gloves, reaching midway up her arms; a gold girdle, from which hung, by a long gold chain, a large red satin fan with an old ivory lace edge and gold sticks set with rubies; and below the edge of her dress appeared her little feet in gold-embroidered red satin shoes. She looked like a duchess who *had honored a plebeian ball with her presence. She had come with the Bärwalds; but Frau*

Bärwald, who wore the simple travelling dress of a plain housewife, did not feel comfortable in her vicinity and was glad that she soon lost sight of her in a throng of young men, who crowded around her, disputing for the honor of offering her an arm, escorted her to the sideboard, and strove to surpass each other in the boldness with which they struggled to get choice dainties for her.

Bruchstädt had arrived before his friends, whom he soon saw and hastened to greet. He also noticed Frau Ehrwein; but she was so surrounded that he did not attempt to approach her, and withdrew, with the Bärwalds, to a little vacant table in a corner of the large hall, from which they could comfortably watch the gay scene. They had sat there only a few minutes when Frau Ehrwein also came up.

"I am always obliged to seek you first," she said, holding out her hand to Bruchstädt in greeting.

"It was impossible to get near you," he replied *apologetically*, "you were so courted."

"A fine excuse!" she cried gayly: "couldn't

you push the tiresome men aside and force your way to me as victor?"

"You apparently allot me a sort of Perseus character."

"You ought to be flattered that I assign the rôles of such proud heroes."

Meanwhile her train of young private tutors and school teachers began to gather around the table, but Frau Ehrwein scarcely seemed to notice them. She let her eyes wander away from her immediate vicinity to the more distant parts of the hall and, after a pause, said:

"A pretty scene. I should like to sketch it. Professor Bruchstädt, have you a sheet of white paper and a pencil?"

The latter drew from his breast-pocket a small note-book, tore out a leaf and handed it to her with the question: "Will this do?" At the same time half a dozen other hands were extended with bits of paper of various sizes. Taking Bruchstädt's sheet and pencil, she began to draw. After a few strokes, she *crumpled the page* and flung it on the floor,

from which one of the group, with grotesque devotion, picked it up and thrust it into his vest-pocket.

"Have you another sheet?"

Bruchstädt tore out a second leaf and gave it to her. A few minutes later it shared the fate of the first.

"Another one, please."

"Give her the whole note-book at once," said Frau Bärwald, who was becoming very impatient of this affectation.

"No no" cried Frau Ehrwein, who did not seem to notice her friend's sharp tone. "The professor must have something to do, and not remain idle while I am working. But I can't accomplish it," she said after a little pause, pushing away the pencil and paper with a short, nervous gesture.

Of course she could not; she wore tight gloves, and her fingers were as clumsy as though they were in a vice.

"Come, we'll walk about a little," she said rising suddenly. Bruchstädt took his lead-pencil and offered her his arm, on which she

rustled away. Those who were left behind exchanged glances. This time none of her admirers followed.

There was little room between the tables, and Bruchstädt had considerable difficulty in piloting his fair companion through the hall. Wherever they passed heads were turned and put together, whispers and smiles followed them. This was unpleasant to Bruchstädt, it seemed to delight the lady.

"We are making a sensation," she remarked, pressing his arm.

"No wonder. You are so beautiful."

"You are certainly handsomer than I."

"Oh, *Madame!* You forbid me to pay court to you, and now you are paying it to me."

"That is less commonplace than the other way."

They had reached the end of the hall and entered the next room, where an orchestra was playing, and the younger guests had begun to dance. To change the current of the conversation, Bruchstädt asked:

"Do you dance, Frau Ehrwein?"

"No. I dare not. I have heart disease."

"Really?" he exclaimed, half incredulous, half startled.

"Yes. It is serious. I know that I shall not live long."

"Who has made you believe that?"

"At least half a dozen Russian and German physicians, agreeing without consultation. But it gives me no regret, believe me."

"'Life is not the highest good' is a noble poetic saying, but it is unnatural on the lips of a young and lovely woman. I will only believe that things are not as bad as you say. At least there is no evidence of it."

"Yes. Appearances are deceitful. But I know how I often feel."

"Yet you expect so much of yourself? You travel? You lead an exciting society life?"

"What am I to do? I must. I dare not drink champagne, so I intoxicate myself with the music the lights, the women's jewels, the covert warfare of drawing-room conversation. I cannot live entirely without stimulus. You forget how narrow and dull an ordinary wo-

man's life is. We have no work which supplies the place of the joys of existence. We do nothing on which we can sustain ourselves, which gives us self-respect and content. Perhaps, in the future I may become an artist; now I am still a pupil or a dabbler. What is left me by which to escape from the penetrating sense of my nonentity? My personality. Through it alone I can sometimes triumph. And the only scene where I can produce an effect by my personality is the drawing-room. You have your audiences and your readers. I have my admirers, and my envious rivals. You influence by your words, I—so do I. They need not necessarily be instructive ones. If the effect of mine is aided by a pretty face and a tasteful toilette, you probably will not reproach me on that account. Now do you understand why I go into society so eagerly?"

"You defend yourself so admirably, madam, that I no longer have the courage to speak of levity and superficiality."

"Oh, Professor! Levity! Superficiality!"

"I have said nothing. On the contrary, I

perceive that your demonstration is convincing. Yet, if you must pay for your social triumphs with your health, nay, even with your life——”

“What of that? My maxim is: Brief but merry.”

“A wicked proverb, when you have duties, when you ^o have children, to whom you owe your life ”

‘ Herr Professor, I will receive a lesson in maternal love from no one.” She spoke harshly and her little pouting mouth assumed a stern expression. Bruchstädt thought that the scene on the steamer was to be repeated. But the cloud passed away from her face, and she repeated with her former gentleness:

“The rude selfishness of men always cloaks itself with our little ones. That is why rebels often compel children to go before them when they march against the soldiery. We are not mere brooding machines, but human beings. We have our own rights and needs, which children cannot satisfy. Whoever asserts that a young woman can live exclusively in her

children is either ignorant or cruel. I know this one thing; when I have provided for my children, a void remains in my soul—a void which I should vainly try to fill by darning their stockings. I repeat: if I could be creatively active, perhaps I should need nothing else. But as I cannot, there is only one thing which would completely satisfy me, and for which I long from my inmost heart, and that is a great love."

While speaking, she raised her sparkling blue eyes to his with such an expression of the surrender of her whole being to him, that he fairly started and whispered hastily:

"We are watched."

"Are you afraid that I shall compromise you?" she asked, smiling, while the spell vanished from her eyes.

"No, it is just the reverse."

"Oh, I don't fear evil tongues."

A crazy student idea flashed through his brain. What if he should test her fearlessness *and kiss her*, then and there, in the midst of *the hall, before the gazers who were looking*

at the dancers? Of course he banished the temptation, but he flushed crimson, and it almost seemed as though she divined what was passing in his mind, for she pressed his arm closely, guided him slowly back into the great hall, and spoke only when she reached the centre to say:

"Let us go back to the Bärwalds. I am a little tired."

Tuesday, the most zealous members of the convention worked in the divisions, but the majority made an excursion to the Harz. Bruchstädt would gladly have attended the session of his section, but the evening before he had been obliged to promise to join the pleasure trip. They met at the station, and the Bärwalds, Frau Ehrwein, Bruchstädt, and two acquaintances from Berlin took their seats in the same compartment of the carriage. Frau Bärwald already regarded it as a matter of course that Frau Ehrwein and Bruchstädt should join each other, and no longer attempted to interrupt their intercourse. They reached the valley about noon, and without los-

of time set off for the Rosstrappe, where dinner was to be served at noon.

The excursionists trudged sturdily along in groups, the Bärwalds among the foremost. Bruchstädt gave Frau Ehrwein his arm, and wanted to keep pace with the others, but his companion gently detained him, saying: "Not so fast, I cannot." Slowly, falling farther and farther back among the stragglers, they crossed the quiet little square of the Blechhütte to the Bode Bridge, where Frau Ehrwein stopped to take breath. Below, the wild stream dashed between the echoing cliffs, and the round whirlpools circling here and there, in which the sunlight kindled sparkling fiery rings, looked like the rolling eyes of monsters in the depths. Frau Ehrwein leaned against the railing, and gazed down into the ravine filled with rushing motion, the blended colors of the green waves, the white foam, and the golden reflections, and a confused, infinite *melody*. She enjoyed with all her senses the *impressions* of the place, and several minutes *elapsed ere*, starting as if from a dream, s

in said to Bruchstädt, who meanwhile had been watching her alone: "Come."

The whole party was already far in advance, and the two found themselves alone on the highway, which began to rise steeply. Slowly as Bruchstädt walked, it was still too fast for her. Every five steps she paused, pressing her hand upon her heart, her breath became more gasping, and when, after about two hundred paces, they reached a place where an old wooden bench stood by the wayside, she sank down upon it, murmuring: "I can go no farther." Her lips were white, her eyes closed, and her heaving bosom panted for air. Bruchstädt, terrified, sat down beside her; she leaned her head on his shoulder and almost unconsciously he bent down and kissed her silken, red-gold hair. She opened her eyes, looked at him with a faint smile, and moved her beautiful pale face nearer to his rather than withdrew it. His lips sought her brow, her eyes, and her closed mouth, which shrank for the first time under the sudden glow of a fervent, *burning kiss*.

"We cannot stay here," she said, rising.

"But you can walk no farther," he answered positively. "There is a carriage road to the Rosstrappe. We must try to get a vehicle."

They turned, walked slowly back down the steep path, and reached the Blechhütte hotel, where they found the landlord bargaining with a fat, asthmatic Hamburg physician, who also wanted to hire a carriage to save himself the labor of climbing. He guessed what the couple desired, and invited them to ride with him. This would make the expense considerably less. Frau Ehrwein looked somewhat dissatisfied, but while the fat Hamburg doctor was making the final arrangements with the landlord, Bruchstädt hastily whispered to her:

"It will be better so. We shall attract less attention, if we arrive in his company."

During the dinner, on the walk to the Rosstrappe and on the return to the valley, both were more absent-minded and silent than usual. Several times they endeavored to separate that they might not be constantly seen together, but in vain. Without seeking each

other, nay, without even looking for each other, after a few minutes they again found themselves side by side, and at last gave up playing an unskilful farce of indifference which could deceive no observant eye.

For a moment, while on the summit, they had felt that they might relax the constraint of self-repression. It was when, after dinner, the whole party had reached the Rosstrappe and scattered along the verge of the picturesque cliff to enjoy the view of the sheer precipice, the riven bluff opposite, and the lovely, sunlit plain beyond. Every one was absorbed by his own impressions, and Frau Ehrwein availed herself of the opportunity to whisper to Bruchstädt:

"Professor Gustav, it is time for us to talk seriously with each other undisturbed. This will never be possible while we are with the others. Come to me, then, in the hotel to-morrow."

"To your room?" he asked, his eyes emphasizing the question far more strongly than *even his words and tone.*

"Of course," she replied quietly; "but not in the reading-room. Otherwise we might just as well talk here."

"But suppose the Bärwalds should see me——"

"You must come just after ten o'clock, when the public session has begun. Then the coast will be clear."

He, too, really ought to have gone to this session. But surely he ought not even to let it be guessed that he could waver a moment between that duty and the beautiful woman's invitation. Yet he ventured one more objection: "Are you not somewhat imprudent?"

"What a Philistine you are!" she answered, smiling. "I must break you of it."

"Then it is settled. A little after ten tomorrow."

Why did she wish to talk seriously with him? What had she to say? He thought continually of the approaching meeting, spent a restless night, rose unreasonably early, and *was much* agitated when, punctually at five *minutes past* ten, he entered the door of the

City of Prague. He swiftly passed the porter, who knew and bowed to him, had the good fortune to meet no one on the stairs or in the corridor, and, relieved from anxiety, hastened to the room which, for one day, had been his own.

"Come in!" called a voice at his knock, in the firm tone whose musical cadence was so peculiarly attractive.

He hurriedly opened it and glided in, casting one more glance behind him. Neither waiter nor chambermaid was in sight.

Frau Ehrwein sat in a low arm-chair at the window. She wore a long, light-blue silk dressing-gown, trimmed with white lace, and her shining hair floated loosely over her shoulders. She did not rise at his entrance, but merely held out her hand to him, saying:

"How do you do Professor Gustav? Don't look around, and don't look at me. I am neither combed nor dressed."

"You are bewitching," he answered, raising *her hand to his lips*.

"*Flatterer!* I haven't even put on my cor-

sets. See." She took his hand and drew finger-tips lightly along her side. Clasp her in his arms, he fell on his knees beside chair, and drew her to his heart. She made slight semblance of resistance, but he did heed it, and his lips eagerly sought hers. At first answered "no" by a shake of the head but without shunning his embrace, and a moment later they met in a passionate kiss. She escaped from his clasp and with head thrown back and closed eyes, murmured, "No, no—please—some one may come in at any moment."

He reached the door at a bound and shot bolt with a jerk that made a loud rattling sound, at which she opened her eyes in alarm.

CHAPTER III.

"Do you know, Gustav, I can confess to you now that, when I first saw you, down below in the street in front of the hotel, my poor sick heart suddenly stood still. I was familiar with your picture, but you are so much handsomer. At the sight of you I instantly felt: I have met my fate."

"It was the same with me, Paula. Only I had not even seen your picture, and you were entirely a sweet surprise."

She clasped both arms around his neck, kissed him, and whispered with her lips close to his ear:

"Oh, Gustav, you only say so to please me."

"No, child, it is just as I tell you."

"Well then, you knew how to conceal your impressions wonderfully well. Far, far better than I."

"I know I am awkward, I am so unaccustomed to pay attention to ladies."

"It's not a question of paying attention. There are gradations. But you were a block of ice. Not a word, not a look betrayed that I interested you even in the least."

"I'll make up for the omission," said Gustav, drawing her to his breast to kiss her lips and eyes.

"I really ought not to remain so passive. Paula went on, but she made no attempt to resist his caresses. "You have not deserved it. I was obliged to make advances the whole way, you did not spare me a single step."

Gustav constantly stopped her with kisses and she could only falter interruptedly, in broken words:

"You really must despise me very much, don't you? Tell me!"

"Paula, you do not really believe that you are worthy of contempt?"

"I don't know—if I were a man—as a woman of course I regard it differently. I find *sufficient apology* in my love. And yet—"

haps I ought not to have thrown myself at your head."

"You just said that you felt no repentance."

"No. I do feel none. That is: only in one case. Gustav, do you love me?"

"I love you, Paula."

"How do you love me?"

"I can compare it with nothing. Or shall I quote poetry?"

"No. Do you love me as I do you?"

"At least."

"At most would be enough for me."

More rapturous caresses followed in which every thought was submerged, and which were not interrupted by a single word. When, after a time, Paula opened her eyes, closed in delight, and her glance rested upon the watch which lay on the night-table beside her, she released herself from Gustav's embrace. He tried to clasp her again, but she answered:

"No, Gustav. Let us be sensible now. It is already half-past eleven. We must talk *quietly together.*"

Drawing a second chair forward, she sat down opposite to him.

"Now, tell me, Gustav, what are we to do?"

"Why should we busy ourselves with the future? Let us remain in the present. It is too beautiful."

"Yes. But the future also has its claims. And if—and if this hour—should not remain without its consequences?"

He looked at her in alarm. After a pause he murmured:

"We must wait till they appear. Why should we trouble ourselves now?"

"I think we must consider the case. Now we are together. In three days we shall part. Then everything will be much more complicated. So tell me, dearest, what shall I do?"

A heavy weight seemed to oppress him, and it was with difficulty that he uttered the words:

"Then—you must take a journey—some pretext can probably be found—such things happen daily."

"Is it not much simpler for us to marry in time?"

He lifted his head with a gesture of surprise, but did not answer.

"Then you will marry me," she continued, taking his hand in hers, "and we shall save ourselves an unpleasant situation by making all our preparations without loss of time."

Gustav had partially recovered from his surprise, and answered, though still hesitatingly, cautiously choosing his words:

"Paula, there is as yet no reason for precipitate action. For the sake of a remote contingency, we ought not to do anything which we might afterward regret."

"I never should," she said, smiling quietly.

"You don't know that, Paula. A moment's transport ought not to be decisive for the whole life. We are no children. I am thirty-two years old——"

He paused a short time. She felt that the hesitation contained a question, and said:

"I am ashamed. I am really too old for you. Twenty-nine."

"You are certainly not too old, but you should no longer commit school-girl follies.

You have no acquaintance with me. know nothing about me. It would be warrantable to place your fate so unceremoniously in my hands."

"That does not apply to me, for I know you, and everything about you, as well though I had lived with you from your birth. But you may be speaking for yourself."

"Child, in speaking for you, I speak myself also. I will make you a proposal. We will give each other six months for consideration. Our blood will cool. We will calmly and soberly examine ourselves, and then honestly what conscience dictates. If, at the end of six months, we feel as we do to-day, we will be able to bind ourselves to each other for life without scruple. But, if it has been only a transient ardor with you or with me, he uttered the last three words with special emphasis—"we shall certainly know it at the close of six months, and can honestly tell each other so, and thus protect ourselves from great folly."

She smiled and answered carelessly

though she had paid little heed to Gustav's last words:

"As you please, dearest; then we will allow ourselves six months' time for reflection. But tell me, Gustav, must we live in Brussels, when we are married? I would so much rather stay in Germany. Can't you do something to get a German professorship."

"Paula," replied Gustav very gravely, "you are already offending against the agreement. The time for consideration must be given in good faith, not as a mere formality and self-deception, not with the secret thought that, in reality, the decision is already made. From to-day I shall consider you for six months absolutely free, and you must so regard yourself—and me also. Neither of us is bound. The word that shall bind or release must first be uttered"—he went through a mental calculation—"on the 24th of March, 1885."

"Very well, I have accepted the condition. Don't you think that you are just a trifle pedantic, Herr Professor?"

"You see that you are not at all aware of my bad qualities I have."

"Fortunately, there are good ones, too," he answered, passing her fingers lightly through his thick brown hair. "Besides—that does not matter. I'll undertake your education."

A short pause ensued, then Paula said suddenly:

"Poor Gustav, I really could have wished you a better fate."

He looked at her inquiringly.

"You have no idea what a poverty-stricken little creature you will marry, if you take me."

"Paula, who desires to talk about such things?" he answered repellently.

"They must be discussed, you grown-up child. Most people consider these things a principal affair, and they are not wholly wrong. You ought to know my situation. I believe I am considered to be well-to-do, because I support my children respectably and can maintain my social position."

"I have not given it a thought, but I c

fess—when I look at your toilettes, your jewels——”

“Yes. That misleads other people too. The cost is supposed to be fabulous, yet after all, it isn’t so immense. It only requires a little management. My jewels, yes; there are some fine ornaments among them. Wedding gifts, presents from my parents and uncles. I’ve often been tempted to sell them, but I bravely resisted. Jewelry is the armor with which a woman defends her position in the drawing-room.”

“But the dresses?”

“I have some gowns purchased when I lived in St. Petersburg, which, it is true, are handsome. I alter the trimming a little, add a flower, take off a bit of lace, and always seem to wear new dresses which attract attention. It costs scarcely a few marks, and merely requires a little taste and the gift of invention.”

She laughed merrily at some amusing recollection, and continued:

“Nothing is more comical than to have gentlemen who are in pursuit of a rich wife, pay

me desperate attention. I often think, 'If I should take you at your word, you would be finely duped.' I should really like to try once, merely to experience the farce. 'Madam, if I could obtain your hand'—'you shall have it, my dear sir; but you know that I am as poor as a church-mouse, and before our betrothal takes place you must pay some debt for me.' The suitor's face!"

"Have you really any debts?"

"None worth mentioning. That was merely a joke. But the only reason I am not much in debt is because I can work wonders of economy. I am obliged to manage on very small means. I have nothing except what papa gives me, and as our relations are strained you can understand that I don't like to ask."

"But I thought that your former husband was a wealthy man."

"He is. But the verdict was against me. Russian justice is so strange."

"Yet you were permitted to keep the children?"

"Merely because their father cares nothing for them. He leaves them with me because I want them."

"Does not he provide for them?"

"Very little. Almost nothing. He is ready to take them, if I will give them up, but so long as they remain with me, he will do scarcely anything for them. But I am not willing to part with the children, though financially they might perhaps be better off with their father. Hitherto they were my only support in life. I might say they were the life-belt, which kept me above the water. But for them I should have sunk."

Her face had clouded and her blue eyes gazed dreamily into vacancy. After a short pause, she continued:

"You see the situation, Gustav. I have told you the simple truth. I took up painting because I must earn money. But until art brings me some revenue—at present it is still an outlay—I must do a little conjuring to make both ends meet."

"The thought that you have pecuniary anx-

ieties is very painful, Paula. I hope you will allow me, in urgent cases——”

“Very gladly, Gustav,” she said quickly. “I am usually extremely proud, but from you I will accept everything. It will be a sweet feeling to be under obligation to you. And I will tell you one thing for your satisfaction, my darling. You will marry a poor woman, it is true, but an excellent housekeeper. That is worth something. You’ll see what I can accomplish with small means.”

“That is, if, on the 24th of March, we decide to belong to each other. Never forget our compact.”

“You take care that I shall not,” she answered somewhat irritably, and turned away pouting. But a few kisses and caressing words from him very speedily dispelled the shadow from her brow.

“Go now, Gustav,” she said, rising. “It is almost noon. I must dress. The Bärgwal may come in at any moment and see me.”

Throwing both arms around his neck she *clung to him* a moment in silence. Then

hastily seized his hat and pushed the bolt cautiously back. Paula opened the door and looked out into the corridor; no spy was in sight. Gustav hurried out and succeeded in leaving the hotel without meeting any one on the stairs or in the entry.

He took a long solitary walk to the bank of the Elbe and along the river, that he might give himself up to his thoughts. He was greatly dissatisfied with himself. He stood on the brink of an adventure, whose possible developments might cause him great discomfort. Two hours before he had hastened to the meeting, longing for the woman, subject to her sign, a slave of his excited senses, and yet mentally free. Now he was cool and without desire, his own will had resumed control of his thoughts and deeds, the woman no longer possessed the slightest power over him, yet he was inwardly in bondage. Bound by a serious error which he had committed. He had not been sincere. He had tried subtly to prove to *himself that he was not committed at all, that he had avoided any promises, explicitly with-*

held his decision, but he could not impose upon himself. He had maintained the form of his freedom in words, but completely forfeited it by his deeds.

Paula was certainly a beautiful, clever woman, who appealed strongly to the senses. He would have pitied the man who could cross her path, without turning his head to look at her. But marry her? That would not have occurred to him even in a dream. It seemed so foolish, so impossible, that he did not at first even enumerate the reasons against it. She was the very embodiment of egotism, and as much in love with herself as a female Narcissus. Though she had moments of devotion to the man whom she loved, it was merely a confirmation of the clever saying that love is dual selfishness, and this kind of brief self-forgetfulness was valueless for permanent companionship. She was capricious, pleasure-loving, inconstant as a will-o'-the-wisp; he was accustomed to a quiet, regular life of labor, and nothing would have tempted him to become the jealous guardian of a whimsical flirt.

Then, apart from her traits of character, she had a past, a history, she had been a wife for years, she was the mother of two children. The idea made him feel a repugnance, almost a loathing, which for an instant involuntarily closed his eyes and shook him from head to foot. As a zoologist, he believed with the best investigators, in spite of Settegast's opposition, that a woman always retains the impression made by the father of her first child, and his indignation was almost awakened by the thought that he, a young, vigorous man, should marry to have children who would not be wholly his own.

But, since he knew all this, why did he not instantly tell her what he thought when she made him that amazing proposal of marriage? Why did he not answer at once: "Marry you? Never. All my instincts rebel against making the mother of another man's two children my wife." Why had he used evasions, spoken of a period of consideration, permitted her to dream of a future which he knew that she would never realize? Why had he told

her that he loved her when, at the utmost, she had merely attracted him sensually, and no longer did even that?

Yes, why? Was it weakness? Was it cowardice? He would not acknowledge to himself that it was this alone, but eagerly endeavored to find explanations and excuses for his conduct. No; he had no right to treat this woman with the brutality of a pillaging soldier and say: "I wanted you, now I have possessed you, and that is all." Paula was no wanton. If she had yielded to him without struggle, it was evidently because she loved him. Others might condemn her. He alone ought not. He might have refused her sacrifice. But he would practise no such rigid morality, worthy of a Stylite, toward a charming woman. As he had accepted her love, he at least owed her courtesy. It could not fail to humiliate her deeply in her own eyes, if he told her plainly that he did not love her any more. That, from this time, she would be indifferent to him. It must make her, in her own consciousness, the lowest of the low. It w

moral murder which he dared not commit. Veracity certainly has its rights, but so has a living human being. What harm would it do if he did not turn his back abruptly, but gradually, considerately, with chivalric courtesy, which would preserve her self-respect? He had required six months' time for consideration. What might not happen in half a year! He thought of the tale of the Persian Minister, who had promised his Shah to teach his favorite ass to speak within ten years! "In ten years the Shah, or the ass, or I myself may be dead."

Paula was fickle and capricious. In six months she would probably forget him, especially if he carefully avoided feeding her flame. And, fortunately, he could so easily do that. He lived in Brussels, she in Berlin. She was surrounded by admirers, she went to parties, balls, the theatre. His image would doubtless fade quickly from her mind, and she would probably drop him long before March 24th, the day appointed for the decision, had arrived. *Thus this adventure would end in the*

pleasantest manner for all concerned, and he would be spared plain statements which were so painful to him that, at present, he was simply incapable of making them.

So he tried to soothe his conscience which upbraided him with bad faith, but he did not long succeed. As a consumptive person dares not inhale a breath which will reach to the bottom of the lungs, because he feels that beyond a certain spot the entering air would cause coughing, stinging, and pain, he did not extend his self-examination beyond a certain very superficial point, because he feared a mortifying perception if he penetrated farther into the depths.

A note from Paula, which he found when he returned to his hotel about two o'clock to dine, informed him that the Bärwalds intended to go to the theatre that evening, that they had a box and a seat for him, but he must decline the invitation and come to her again after seven o'clock. These were the first lines of her writing which he had seen. Her paper *bore in one corner in relief a violet in the*

natural color and, like herself, diffused the fragrance of this flower. She had a bold, dashing chirography, and her letters were large and heavy, like those of a man in a position of authority. There was almost a contradiction between the characters and the words, when she addressed him as "my master," and signed herself, "your happy victim, Paula."

When he entered her room that evening he found her dressed for the street, and after a tender kiss, she said to him: "We will go out, Gustav, I fear it will be noticed if we remain here." Instead of replying, he continued to kiss her. She slipped from his embrace, exclaiming, "You will rumple everything," and the next moment had removed her hat, jacket, and gloves, and was seated on his knee with her head on his shoulder and no troublesome defense of outer garments against his caresses.

Fully an hour and a half had passed when he whispered in her ear:

"Well, Paula, were not we going out?"

"You are right," she answered, "although

I think it is far pleasanter here." She rose, groped her way to the table, and lighted the candles. "Then," she added, while arranging her hair before the glass and passing a damp towel over her burning face and eyes, "we must economize our time. Have you thought how soon we shall part?"

"Yes, day after to-morrow."

"Doesn't it trouble you?"

"What is the use of disturbing ourselves about it? We knew how brief this happiness would be."

"Can't you come to Berlin with us for a little while?"

"No, Paula; I must go home."

"Home! The only home of lovers is with the object of their love. When I return to my apartments, I shall feel that I am going to a foreign land, because you will not be there. I am at home only when with you, and you ought to feel so too."

"When I said, 'home,' I meant duty, and the usual routine of life."

"Duty! I hate duty. It would be so noble

if, for once, you would rebel against duty, like a man, to live solely for your inclination."

"I do not know whether that would be so very manly."

"Far more manly than weak subjection to the constraint of official regulations."

"Child, you have the idea of a lover which is derived from guilt-edged poetry. He is a young prince and knight errant. He is alone in the world with the object of his love. He lifts her upon his proud steed and rides off with her to Spain, when she wants sunshine and oranges, and to the castle on northern seas when she desires cool breezes. Unfortunately real life is not so beautiful, and even a man in love must consider all sorts of minor prosaic details."

"You naturalists are insufferable Philistines," she pouted. "There isn't a trace of idealism in you. And that I should fall in love with such a prosaic fellow!"

"Well, Paula, if you——"

She suspected what he was going to say, and interrupted him. "You need not an

swer everything I say. Let me chatter hazard."

She blew out the candles; at the door they embraced each other once more in the dark; then she let him precede her and followed a few minutes later. They walked through the quiet streets arm in arm, in blissful silence, to the restaurant at the railway station, where they intended to take their supper.

After some conversation, which consisted principally of low monosyllabic exclamations and pet names, Paula said suddenly:

"My trip to Magdeburg will not have resulted exclusively in happiness."

Gustav looked at her inquiringly.

"My first act on returning to Berlin will be to dismiss an admirer."

"Only one?"

"Only one, you naughty man. The rest can continue their service. They are merely ornamental."

"But this one?"

"Is serious, and therefore——"

"Who is the unfortunate man?"

She hesitated slightly; then, watching the effect of the name upon his face, said: "Herr Kornemann."

Gustav did not move a muscle.

"Has nothing been told you about him in connection with me?"

"I have probably heard his name, but I know nothing in detail."

"There are no details to know, my Gustav. But there is plenty of gossip. It will be better for me to tell you things as they are, then you will be armed against the serpent stings. Kornemann is an artist and my teacher. During the lessons he fell in love with me. This did not disturb me much—I am so accustomed to it, and it did not injure his zeal as an instructor, on the contrary. He followed me to the seashore in summer, and cannot let a day pass without seeing me. He wants to marry me, but hitherto I have been unable to make up my mind to it. He earns a great deal of money, it is true, and can help me on in my career as an artist; it has touched me, too, to see that he loves my children, not like a father,

but like a grandfather. But whenever I began to soften, he repelled me by his savage jealousy and nervous restlessness. I cannot endure it. Now all is over, and he will receive his dismissal. Does what I say grieve you, my dearest?"

His face certainly expressed deep discomfort.

"Well, it is not pleasant for me. I am sorry that, through my fault, a man who loves you, and seeks to marry you, must suffer."

"Think of yourself, Gustav, not of him."

"I am not thinking solely of him, but of you also, child. It is a painful thought that you are destroying the bridges behind you, although you do not yet know whether you will find compensation."

"Your solicitude is touching, Gustav. Am I prudently to allow Kornemann to pay me attention, while I belong to you?"

"I don't say that. It is just a fatality——"

"I understand that you do not wish me to make a sacrifice for you. It is none. I do not love Kornemann. If I did, I should not have given myself to you. Or are you afraid

that between two chairs I might fall to the ground?"

"Yes, if at the end of six months you do not care for me."

"Have no anxiety on that score. My suitors are as numerous as Penelope's. I have to refuse one every week. If any day I should merely desire to establish myself, if I want to complete the furniture of my drawing-room with a husband, the only difficulty will be to choose. A few days ago the deputy Buckow, you probably know him, the millionaire ship-owner, closed a month's silent adoration by laying his hand and heart at my feet. I told the poor man, whom I highly esteem, how sincerely I regretted that I could not reciprocate his feelings. But this did not deter him. He declared that he should renew his offer every few months, until I either thought better of it or married some one else. You see, I still have a sheet-anchor."

On the way home she walked very slowly, complained of palpitation of the heart and oppression, and lapsed into a very gentle mood

"I cannot believe," she sighed, "that I have known you only four days, far less that I shall be a hundred miles away from you day after to-morrow."

"Life is cruel," he murmured, but without earnestness.

"And I fear, my Gustav, that we shall not be able to remain here longer undisturbed. We really must bid each other farewell now. It is very sad."

He glanced hastily around him and, in the empty street, pressed a long kiss upon her lips.

"Gustav," she said, drawing her veil down over her face again, "I will not say to you, 'Do not forget me, when I am far away.' You will never forget your Paula while life remains. I know that."

He nodded assent.

"But this is not enough. Promise that you will write to me every day."

"Every day?" he asked, startled.

"Every day. I exact that. I am not willing to live a single day without a word from you."

He took the request figuratively. "Every day," in her exaggerated language, probably meant "often." He could promise that.

Thursday was very crowded. Public closing session, banquet, and evening entertainment occupied the members of the convention from morning until midnight, with only a brief interval of rest at a late hour in the afternoon. They were constantly together, scarcely lost sight of each other, but could have no private conversation. Not until on the way home from the farewell entertainment did Frau Bärwald find it possible to get possession of Bruchstädt a moment. She had not been able since Monday to speak to him, even once, without witnesses.

"Well, my poor Bruchstädt, she said, "I warned you and, so far, did my duty. I wash my hands in innocence."

"I don't understand you," he answered with an air of innocence, which at the utmost was sufficiently well feigned for the dark street. It would *not have borne* broad daylight.

"Don't dissemble so. Of course you unde

stand me. Frau Ehrwein wants to capture you. She means to marry you."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because I see it. Other people see it too."

"If you suspect Frau Ehrwein of matrimonial speculations, you ought to say to yourself that I am the very last person she would be likely to choose. I am no good match. I am not rich. I am no society man. I live with my mother, from whom I shall never part."

"The lady either does not know all this, or hopes to manage matters in some way."

"But why should she, when she can carry her point so much more easily? She need only stretch out her hand to find better matches. Herr Buckow wants to marry her, so does the artist Kornemann, and I don't know how many others."

Frau Bärwald stood still a moment in astonishment. "Did she tell you that humbug?"

"I have heard it," he answered evasively.

"Don't believe anything of the sort. Buckow is an old man and perhaps capable of committing a folly. But Kornemann—no. He cer-

ptur
tainly never wanted to marry her. She will find no one at all in Berlin. Admirers, certainly. But a husband—no. He can at the utmost be caught at a convention of naturalists. Once more, Bruchstädt, keep your eyes open.”

“Don’t be troubled. It requires two to marry.”

“I shan’t be at ease until I see you once more in Brussels and the lady in Berlin.”

She could say no more, for Frau Ehrwein, who was walking in front with Professor Bärwald, stopped to let the other couple come up and to question Frau Bärwald about the departure. She would willingly have spent all the next day in Magdeburg and not set out for Berlin until the evening train. But Frau Bärwald insisted upon leaving at ten minutes past eight in the morning, and Paula was obliged to yield, as she was still ostensibly under the protection of the Bärwalds.

It was again gray autumnal weather when they took leave of each other the next morning at the train. Paula looked pale, perhaps because she had been obliged to rise earlier

than usual, perhaps merely on account of the contrast between her delicate complexion and the black lace scarf which she had again thrown over her golden hair, but her face was calm and her eyes were tearless. Bruchstädt had been taken possession of by Bärwald.

"We have really seen very little of each other, old fellow," he said, slapping him affectionately on the shoulder.

"It is always so among crowds of people," Gustav answered apologetically.

"At least you have cultivated the Privy Councillors? Have you done anything to secure a call?"

"The competition was too strong," he replied with a forced smile. The truth was that, after the first day, he had seen no one, spoken to no one, attended no session, simply vanished from the convention.

The guard gave the summons to enter the railway carriages. Gustav embraced Bärwald and warmly pressed the hand of his friend's wife. Paula, self-willed as usual, entered last, *leaning lightly* on Gustav's hand and shoulder.

In that moment she whispered hurriedly:
"You'll write every day, won't you?" She
could say no more—Frau Bärwald's bright
keen eyes were resting on them both.

CHAPTER IV.

GUSTAV, who had left Magdeburg two hours after his friends, reached Brussels about half-past four in the morning. He had charged his mother not to meet him at the station, but could not prevent her from receiving him at home, affectionately bustling about to take his travelling wraps and set before him the coffee she had ready. While he was drinking it, she sat opposite to him, asking a few questions about the success of his journey and the friends whom he had met. He answered in monosyllables, and his mother did not urge her inquiries, attributing his disinclination to talk to the fatigue of travelling.

He allowed himself only a few hours' rest, and early in the morning, sat down at his desk with a somewhat bewildered brain. He felt *obliged to write to Paula at once, that she might not be humiliated by the thought that*

so quickly ceased to interest him. On the other hand, he did not wish to adopt in a tone, that he might not increase of untruthfulness beyond the point needed to him necessary. He therefore said that he had united chivalry and prudence in his writing, somewhat briefly, that he had lived safely, hoped that she had done the same, would always remember the days in Hamburg with longing, and only regretted their young happiness should be so cruelly interrupted by the speedy separation.

He was pleasantly surprised when, that very evening, he received a letter from Frau Ehrenreich. So she, too, had written directly after his arrival. It ran as follows:

MY GUSTAV: Just returned home from the theatre. The excitement of the last few days has made me ill. I am completely used up. I think and feel only the one thing: that I no longer belong to myself. My children are *and happy* to have me with them again. I am *writing* very disconnectedly, my blond hair is *grey*, but you will know how to read it.

won't you? I am expecting your letter to-day. You had two hours in Magdeburg, and certainly could not spend them better than in writing to me. May it bring me news of your well-being—so far as you can ever be happy again without your Paula. I kiss your dear eyes, and place myself in your hands, my Gustav.

“PAULA.”

He now felt sincere contrition for the neglect of which he had been guilty. He really ought to have written to her from Magdeburg. It would have been so tender, so loving, to have visited her by letter on the day of separation! To partially atone for the omission, he instantly sent after the first letter, which had already gone, a second, in which, far more tenderly than in the first, he apologized for the Magdeburg sin of omission on the ground that he had been surrounded by colleagues who claimed his attention, and referred to the letter sent that morning which would show that he had not lost a moment in communicating with her. Sunday afternoon the mail brought another *missive from Paula*. She wrote:

"GUSTAV, MY GUSTAV:—What does this mean? What has happened? Nothing yesterday, nothing to-day—has anything befallen you? Are you ill? Has a letter been lost? Do you wish to torture me? I cannot rest until I have heard from you. Telegraph me at once that all is well with you. I will hope that you have only been negligent. If it is so, do not rely upon indulgence and forgiveness. you naughty, dear, handsome man.

"PAULA."

Telegraph to her? No. That was no longer necessary, for in a few hours she would certainly receive both the letters sent the day before. But he must write to her again at once, to soothe and conciliate her. He now awaited with some anxiety her reply to his first two letters. What impression had they probably made upon Paula? He learned the next day. Paula wrote:

"DEAREST GUSTAV:—I have just received your two letters at the same time. I ought not to say so, you naughty, negligent man, but *they make me happy*, and I thank you a thousand times. Gustav, my dear dear husband!

you will not forget me. I know it now, and it gives me bliss. I wake in the morning and see you before me, I fall asleep at night under your eyes. Am I well? Fairly well. I am very quiet and little inclined to be gay. I clasp your dear face between my hands, and you—you look so earnestly at me, and kiss me tenderly on the eyes and call me your Paula. I am, I will be. Be happy, dearest, and continue to love me.

PAULA."

Now the letters followed one another daily; he answered punctually—courtesy surely required that. His mother was in the habit of receiving every one who called upon him, even the postman, if he had anything to say or to ask. For a whole week he daily brought a letter with insufficient postage, upon which the postal fine must be paid. The first time Frau Bruchstädt said nothing, the second time she was perplexed, the third she grew angry. It always came from Berlin, had the same handwriting, the same odor of violets. When the impropriety was repeated a fourth and a fifth time, *she at last* gave vent to her indignation.

"What queer correspondent have you in Berlin, Gustav? The fellow will ruin us. If I were you, I'd send these letters back."

Gustav hastily seized the letter and said, not without blushing:

"Who can be so mean, dear mother? It's only twenty-five centimes."

"It isn't so much the money, but who is the person that doesn't know that a foreign letter costs double postage, and moreover has such a mania for writing?"

"An acquaintance I made in Magdeburg. The matter is of no consequence."

He held the letter in his hand, but did not open it, as his mother was looking at him inquiringly. She noticed that he did not wish to read it in her presence, and went out slowly in silence. The little scene left Gustav in a very uncomfortable mood, for his relations with his mother were the most affectionate imaginable, and had never been disturbed by any discord. Frau Bruchstädt was a plain, uneducated woman, but practical and endowed with natural sagacity, and she idolized her

ing from his mother, and to transplant her, at her advanced age, to a foreign country seemed cruel. It was again Frau Bruchstädt who dispelled his doubts. "You are going to Brussels," she said curtly and firmly, "and I am going with you." She did not consider herself too old to learn a little French yet, and she would accommodate herself to foreign customs as far as was necessary. So the old shop in Bonn was closed, and Frau Bruchstädt moved with her son into the pretty little house in the Rue de Toulouse, in Brussels.

Gustav, who at last was independent, still remained toward his mother the child he had always been, even in the smallest trifles. He faithfully brought her his salary, his lecture receipts, his examination fees, and the royalties on his books, and was happy in the delight which the large sums afforded her. He wanted nothing for himself except a little pocket-money, for which he always asked his mother, as in the old student days. There was not even the shadow of a secret between the two. *If he made a lecture tour, she had the right to*

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open his letters in order to forward urgent ones and let unimportant ones lie. Everybody who knew Gustav knew his mother, too, at least by name and his description; she even endeavored to have an interest in his professional work, though she could not understand it, and, if she did not read his communications to the academies, he was always urged to tell her what the other anatomists and physiologists said to them.

So maternal love still surrounded the man of two-and-thirty with the warmth of the sitting-hen, and there was not a line in his nature and existence which was not open to the mother's eye at every moment. And now, for the first time, it happened that he had something to conceal from her, and what was the most unpleasant part of it, the blunder of the insufficient postage could not have failed to bring to her notice, during the first few days, that he was keeping secrets from her. It was no longer possible to atone for this entirely, but at least his mother's attention must not be kept on the alert by a daily payment of the *postal fine*. It was necessary to point o'

Paula's thoughtlessness to her, but this necessity was painful to him. Instead of resenting this on Paula, as would have been just, he felt, for the first time in his life, a vague sense of shame for being such a "mother's boy;" the maternal guardianship which, hitherto, had been his happiness, and even his secret pride, suddenly became oppressive, and he caught himself wishing that he was less closely watched, possessed more independence. The liberty which hitherto, in his pure, transparent life, he had not needed, he now missed when he began to do things which he could not confess.

He was unwilling to inform Paula of his domestic relations; nay, he was reluctant to mention his mother's name to her. He dreaded her derision if he should tell her how completely he was still in leading-strings. Yet, on the other hand, he shrank from appearing in her eyes a niggard, who was annoyed by the daily outlays of a few pennies, if, without giving the true reason for his request, he asked her to put the correct postage on her letters in

future. At last, he slipped out of the embarrassing position by giving the matter a jesting turn which, however, of course did not prevent his mother from being compelled to pay the usual extra postage on the violet-scented letters arriving with the customary punctuality on the two following days. Both times she laid them silently upon her son's writing-desk, without asking for an explanation which was not voluntarily given.

On the third day the reply to his correction came, at last with the proper amount of postage. As he read it, he thought he saw and heard the Paula of the *Elbe* steamer. She curtly requested him to inform her how much he had expended; she would forward the amount by return mail. She had supposed that her letters possessed a certain value for him; from what he had written she must believe that, in his eyes, their worth did not equal a few pennies.

This injustice exasperated him. He left the letter unanswered, and did not write on the following day, which was rendered easier by

the fact that Paula also remained silent two days. The pause was welcome to him. Hitherto, against his original intention, he had obeyed Paula's caprice of hearing from him daily, and he intended to profit by the opportunity of breaking the constraint of the established custom.

On the morning of the third day, after his lecture, one of the first of the winter term, he was busy in the laboratory of the university, when his mother suddenly entered and gave him a telegram which had just arrived. Usually she would have opened it without hesitation; now her delicacy deterred her, as her son evidently had secrets. But, as he rarely received telegrams, she was anxious and brought it herself in order to learn at once whether it contained bad news.

Gustav flushed deeply, took the dispatch, hastily opened it, and read: "Dearest, what has happened? Why do you torture me? Am I wretched without your letters." During this time *Frau Bruchstädt* watched him anxiously. "Nothing serious," he said, forcing a smile

and thrust the paper quickly into his pocket. His mother still stood before him, hesitating, evidently with a question upon her lips. But she repressed it when Gustav began to speak of other things, and, in a few moments, went away. He thought he saw while he accompanied her out that her eyes were filled with tears.

His first emotion, when he was again alone and had re-read the message several times, was indignation. Always these sudden caprices! Always this selfish lack of consideration! Could not Paula tell herself that he did not live alone, that telegrams must startle the members of his household, occasion questions and answers? Only the longer he examined the page before him, the gentler became his judgment, the more tender his mood. This poor Paula was certainly touching, with her original, vehement feelings, and her noble disregard of all minor matters where love was concerned. She loved him, and was suffering.

His mother's tearful eyes had completely vanished from his mental field of vision. He saw

only Paula's beautiful, pale face, whose large blue eyes gazed at him with sorrowful entreaty. Hastening without delay to the nearest telegraph office, he wired to Berlin: "Silent because you were sulky. Will write to-day. Believe in my love."

From this time letters were daily exchanged. If Gustav, overburdened with professional work, wrote briefly or not at all, complaints, entreaties, reproaches instantly came. "Write to me daily, and at length, at length," she said once; "you don't know what a letter from you is to me." "I don't understand," Paula wrote another time, "how you can sleep at night without having written to me. Is it not a proud feeling that you have the power to make a poor fellow-mortal happy by a few lines from your hand? Do you not consider that it imposes a duty upon you?" Paula's letters grew longer and longer; eight pages soon became the rule. She apparently related the most minute details of her daily life, a quarrel with *her landlord*, an amusing speech of her oldest *boy*, a disagreeable letter from Riga. She

mentioned visits which she paid and received, every book, every newspaper which she read. She often went to evening entertainments, and then described how charming she looked in her costumes, how one and another showed her attention, how foolishly infatuated some one else was with her. And if this childish vanity made him impatient, he was immediately conciliated by the following lines, in which Paula told him how deeply she loved him, and how, in the midst of all the people thronging around her, she saw only his dear face, heard his musical voice. She possessed a matchless gift of expressing her love in ever new and varied forms, sportive and earnest, droll and touching, with original exaggerations, unexpected turns, at times as simple and delightfully awkward as a schoolgirl in love for the first time. In not a single letter did she omit to allude to his personality, his looks, to tell him how handsome, how elegant, how interesting he was, what wonderful eyes, what bewitching lips he had, *how rapturous* it was to play with his *thick fragrant hair* and silken-soft beard. These

flattering letters did not fail to produce their effect on Gustav. He was not vainer than other men, and though he knew that he was attractive in his personal appearance—his mother, in the absence of others, had told him so often enough—hitherto he had set little value on it. Now he began to be satisfied with himself. Paula's caressing words awakened the pride of the flesh. He rejoiced that he was a handsome man, worthy of a woman as beautiful as Paula. Her letters were beginning to become a necessity to him. He waited with increasing impatience for the hour in the afternoon which brought the Berlin mail, and swallowed with deep gratification the honey which Paula daily presented for him. He always read her letters twice and three times—often still more frequently—to be sure that he omitted nothing, to enjoy every word of love and adoration as thoroughly as a child who is fond of dainties devours a dish of sweet cream. He always answered under the impression of her *letter*. His tone increased in warmth with *hers*. Unconsciously to himself, he strove to

the emulate, if possible, to surpass her. Half intentionally, half instinctively, he adopted the same method which proved so admirable with Paula's pen—acute, flattering admiration of her personal charms, electric words of love which were to encompass, stir, thrill her like the gliding fingers of a rude hand. In the midst of his numerous occupations it often cost him a great sacrifice to find time for the daily letter, but he fulfilled the new duty zealously and with increasing pleasure. All sorts of vague, unacknowledged feelings blended with it: a man's satisfaction in being able to inspire a cool, coquettish, admired woman with an ardent love, the desire to foster, nay, if possible, fan it to a brighter blaze; lastly, a certain vanity of authorship. For he wrote with the intention of producing an effect. He pondered all day over new forms of homage. Then, when he thought he had written with special intensity, he was eager about the impression which his words would make. He followed the letter in imagination—now it was in Cologne, now in Berlin, now she opened, now she

was reading it. What would she say to it? Would she blush with pleasure, would she smile? Would her heart beat quicker? How often would she read the passage? He impatiently awaited the answer which would tell him what she felt at his words, and when her letter was more overflowing, sweeter, more full of rapture than any of her former ones, he rejoiced like a young actor at the thunders of applause from an enthusiastic audience and felt stimulated to still greater efforts.

The most evident result of this situation was that his mind was filled all day with Paula's image. She also took care in other ways that he should be constantly engrossed by her. Every one of her letters, between the description of her acts and feelings, and the admiration of his appearance and manners, always contained a little corner for some request or wish. At first, these were very trivial; in fact, only another form of tenderness. She enclosed a lock of her beautiful golden hair and asked in exchange "at least four times as much of his, *which was so much shorter.*" The habit of

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acute observation, which never deserts the naturalist, instantly made him perceive, on examination of the charming gift, that each individual hair had its root. The little curl had not been clipped from the head, but was composed of the hairs which came out in combing, which she had saved with prudent caution. Perhaps she had been collecting them for years, and had a stock from which she could make an adorer happy without being compelled to impair the natural adornment of her head. At first he was inclined to be irritated, for she was really practising a little duplicity toward him, but at last he smiled at the feminine adroitness with which she combined apparent readiness to sacrifice and actual avoidance of any personal self-denial. Another time she sent him her picture, and asked for his, "not one of those which she saw at the Bärwalds, but a new one, taken for her, and representing him as he looked now when he loved Paula." To sit for a photograph required time, and he had none. So he answered, somewhat carelessly, that when he found a convenient oppor-

tunity he would go to the photographer's and, according to her desire, have a picture taken for her alone. But he found himself in a fine pickle! Paula's next letter was very ungracious. "When I do you the honor," she wrote, "to ask you to have your likeness taken for me, you are not to attend to it 'at a convenient opportunity,' but at once. Do you understand, Herr Professor? I will accept no apologies and no evasions. You cannot have anything more important to do than to gratify a wish of mine. By way of punishment for your incivility, I will give you another task which will also cost you time. You must always find time for me." She enclosed a list of four or five French books, which could certainly be obtained more easily and cheaply in Brussels than in Berlin, and which he must send her that very day by mail.

After the books she asked for artificial flowers; then for gloves of a certain make; then a few little bottles of her favorite perfume—wild violet; then water and oil colors; then *chocolate almonds*, "but only the finest of their

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kind;" always with the argument that such things could be had better and cheaper in Brussels than in Berlin. Whether they were really cheaper Gustav could not determine; they seemed dear enough to him, for he was obliged to pay for them out of his pocket-money, which was not adapted to the liberality of a club-man in love. He was obliged to apply to his mother frequently, at very unusual times in the middle of the month, for sums which seemed enormous to the simple, frugal woman. This happened for the first time in his life, and he did it with an embarrassed manner, but gave no explanation and his mother asked none. He was not the bread-winner, the money he requested was his own, and she was too wise, and possessed too much delicacy of feeling, not to perceive that she ought not to make the last remnant of childlike dependence burdensome to the son who had reached the age of two-and-thirty. Yet it did seem oppressive, and he thought of new ways of increasing his receipts which his mother would not know.

About five weeks passed in this way.

October was nearly at an end, when one day the usual letter from Berlin did not arrive. This indicated some trouble, and he wondered anxiously about the cause of the silence. Nothing came the following day, and, on the third, a brief note from Fräulein Winter, the governess of Paula's little boys, who "at Frau Ehrwein's request, informed him that she had been ill since the day before yesterday. The doctor did not yet know what the ailment was, but Frau Ehrwein feared that she should not be able to write for the next few days, and therefore at least wished to tell him the cause of her silence. If the illness should take a serious turn, she would telegraph at once. Now Frau Ehrwein had only one desire: to see him by her sick-bed."

The letter made a very unpleasant impression upon him. If Gustav desired to be perfectly candid with himself, he could not help admitting that he did not feel so much anxiety concerning Paula's condition, or sympathy with her suffering, as a vague dread of fresh complications, and extreme discomfort at the

thought that Fräulein Winter was evidently conversant with everything. He desired no witnesses of his little adventure, and hitherto it had been a cheering thought that he had none. But there could be no change, and matters must take their course.

Fräulein Winter kept her promise faithfully. The next day the first telegram came: "Measles. Serious heart-trouble. Please come here at once." This was impossible, and he sent an answer to that effect. The following day the despatch reported: "Bad night. High fever. She asks constantly for you." Gustav now seriously considered the question whether he should start immediately for Berlin, but he could not resolve to do so. Measles! That was not a dangerous disease. If he took the journey, he would probably find Paula already out of bed. He could not allow himself to be persuaded into foolish acts, either by the fears of ignorant attendants, or by the sentimental caprices of a love-sick woman. To go to Berlin and not call on Bärwald was impossible. Yet what would his friend say, if he should ap-

pear there abruptly in the middle of the term? He might as well tell him the whole affair with Paula at once! No. He would stay in Brussels. And, day after day, for nearly a week, a telegram summoned him, and the letters of the governess, which described the sickness itself in very indefinite terms, were perfectly clear upon one point: Frau Ehrwein's principal suffering was due, not to her illness, but to his absence.

At last, after an interval of twelve days Paula wrote again herself—deeply wounded and offended. "I thank you very much for your interest, people are extremely kind. If you will have the goodness to write a few words to me daily, you will contribute to my speedy recovery. I hope that I shall not seem too exacting. I intend to be as modest as decorum requires. With renewed thanks for your kindness, and cordial regards, your Paula." Then came the postscript: "I believe the lines I send to-day are not what I ought to write. Forgive me, Gustav; but who is to blame that I am embittered and no longer trust protestations?"

Protestations! Had he ever assured her that, at her first summons, without necessity, to the neglect of every duty, he would fly to Berlin? However, she was not now in the condition to bear serious representations, and on the contrary, he strove to soothe her by words of love. He easily succeeded. She was in a strangely gentle, melting mood, due to convalescence, which really did not seem to him quite warranted, as on the whole he had received the impression that the illness could not have been very severe. She spoke of herself as a beloved being whose life had been in danger, and who had now risen from the grave. She described her appearance as she sat up in bed or in an easy-chair, robed in white, with loosened hair; pallid, almost transparent cheeks, a weary expression of suffering upon her lips; her eyes melting and radiant, as if they could gaze beyond earthly things. She described her visitors, how her appearance touched them, how they looked at her in silence, lowered their voices, could not turn their eyes away. And how kind everybody

had been to her during her illness, and were still. The physician was evidently in love with her, and was reluctant to leave the sick-room. Her friends, even Kornemann (so he had not yet received his dismissal?) watched beside her couch in turn. Every day some lady sent dainty dishes. The room was filled with fresh flowers—how did she deserve all this? He alone was cruel; for he did not come, earnestly as she entreated him to do so. This was the constant refrain at the close of her hymns of self-glorification.

Paula had written that the doctor had ordered her to drink heavy Spanish wine, and she feared that it could not be had unadulterated in Berlin. Gustav hastened to send her half-a-dozen bottles of the best Madeira. She mentioned repeatedly and, as it seemed to him, with peculiar emphasis, that, during her illness, Fräulein Winter's self-sacrifice and devotion had been extremely touching and well deserved some token of gratitude, only, unfortunately her situation would not now permit *her to obey the impulse of her heart.* He in-

stantly took the hint, and asked Paula what would probably please the young lady, and whether he might be permitted to show himself grateful in her place. Paula permitted this with great kindness, and even thought that the idea was very charming and did honor to his heart. She advised him to send Fräulein Winter a Brussels-lace handkerchief in a plain, but tasteful little box. In Berlin one such as she described would cost from 20 to 25 marks. In Brussels it proved to be exactly twice the sum, but, by way of compensation, Gustav had the satisfaction of having Paula write that "Fräulein Winter was delighted with the gift, and now loved him almost as much as she herself did." Meanwhile, she added, he must not believe that he had discharged his debt with the gift. She must see him, have his companionship, and could not be well and happy until she was clasped in his arms.

For a week his power of resistance had become more and more feeble. He was now *ready to compromise with his duty*. He would

merely report himself ill for two days. He could give his mother some pretext for a journey of that length. But go to Berlin—no; that he could not and would not do, on account of the Bärwalds. To put an end to Paula's ceaseless entreaties and complaints, he made a momentous resolution, and wrote that he longed for her no less than she for him, he was ready to come to her, but not to Berlin; they must meet in Cologne and spend thirty-six hours together there, undisturbed. He was very eager to learn how his suggestion would be received. Paula wrote: "My darling, your proposal wounds me. I know that you love me, but your way of showing it does not please me. You are the languishing lover, not the man who thinks seriously of a possible marriage. Spending two days together is a different thing from hiding a quarter of an hour or so in a Magdeburg hotel. If I had decided to become your wife, if you were certain that you had that goal in view, the case *would be different*. I should then simply go *o the man* who is my husband, though ex-

ternal circumstances compel him to conceal it from the world for a time. But that is not the state of affairs. We are living in a time of consideration and trial. Is it testing ourselves to indulge in a companionship of several days, and perhaps say later: 'Do you know, I believe that I really can live without you?' "

She conjugated these thoughts through eight pages, with numerous variations, and, after a series of the most tender expressions, concluded: "That is my feeling. But perhaps I am wrong, and I desire nothing more earnestly than to be thoroughly refuted by you."

It would not have been difficult for him to contradict her. He could not consider their Magdeburg relations as innocent as she apparently did, and he did not perceive the slightest distinction between their companionship in that city and the one which he proposed at Cologne. True, her scruples would have permitted no contradiction if they had been made prior to his visit to her hotel in Magdeburg. *Now they were sheer hypocrisy or affectation. Yet, still under the impression of the idea that*

he ought not to humiliate her in her own eyes, he did not tell her all this, but simply answered that she was right, he must yield to her arguments, and repentantly withdrew his proposal with an entreaty for pardon.

This turn of affairs seemed to surprise her very much. She reproached him with vacillation and coldness. He evidently cared nothing about seeing her again. He replied that she had rebuffed him so sharply, that he would never again undertake to approach her with unseemly suggestions. Then she suddenly repented. "My dear, darling Gustav, you can dispose of me as you will. I will do whatever you think right. We must see and talk with each other, that becomes clearer to me day by day. So decide. If you fix upon Cologne, I will come there next week. The situation is not normal, and I was foolish to try to rebel against it."

The necessary arrangements were made, and, on the last Friday in November, he left *Brussels* at eleven o'clock in the evening to go to Cologne. He had one uncomfortable

moment to undergo before starting, when he was obliged to inform his mother of his intended journey, and to ask her for a sum of money very large for his circumstances. His mother had brought the notes from the desk and given them to him with trembling hands, gazing at him meanwhile with troubled eyes from which he was forced to avert his own. She asked no questions, and he said nothing, but her silence was really the most painful part of the affair. What did she probably think of all these unusual occurrences? How much he would have given, if he could have guessed or learned!

After a sleepless night he reached Cologne at half-past six in the morning, and had nearly three-quarters of an hour to wait for the Berlin train. Wearied and worn, he had ample time, during this period of lonely, tiresome expectation, to dream himself into a feverish excitement of sensuous yearning for the beautiful woman who, for two days and a night, would *be wholly his own*. At last the whistle and *bell sounded* and the longed-for train rumbled

into the station. Gustav hurried to the sleeping-car, on whose platform Paula smiled greeting. She wore the short cloak, with the numerous pilgrim capes, and the little fur cap and, though pale, she did not look worse than when he last saw her in Magdeburg.

"You show no traces of your illness," he said, after lifting her down from the carriage.

"I recuperate quickly," she replied, in her beautiful rich voice, her large blue eyes smiling at him.

"Is this all?" he asked, pointing to the little bag which she carried in her hand; evidently without effort.

"I suppose you think that I always travel with a dozen big trunks, as I did at Magdeburg. A toothbrush, a comb, and a hand glass are enough for such expeditions."

They walked slowly, arm in arm, to the Cathedral Hotel, where a well-heated room had been ordered. Paula had sent his letter engaging it, signed with an assumed name from Berlin. The hotel was very empty

this season of the year, and the servants lavished upon the new guests attentions with which they would willingly have dispensed. They were glad when the formality of registering their names in the book was over, and they at last found themselves alone in the elegantly furnished drawing-room on the second story, where a colossal tile-stove was diffusing its pleasant warmth. Now, for the first time, they could embrace and kiss each other to their heart's content, and Gustav's passionate caresses scarcely gave Paula time to remove her outdoor wraps.

When sensible conversation was again possible, Paula said:

"You make me perform fine tricks, you dear, naughty man! Of course, no one in Berlin must suspect that I have gone out of the city. The visitors who call to-day and to-morrow will be told merely that I am not at home. I hope it will occasion no remark. Fräulein Winter is the only person who must know the truth."

"The young lady appears to be aware of

everything," remarked Gustav somewhat reproachfully.

"Is that unpleasant to you?" asked Paula.

"And to you?"

"Yes. But it could not be avoided. I must be frank to the members of my household. I cannot live within my own four walls in an atmosphere of deception and secrecy. Besides, she could not help noticing the daily arrival of a letter from Brussels, and the numerous packages. So I told her that we had met and loved each other, and should be married if our feelings did not change. Don't be angry, dearest, the matter will not expose you, but at the utmost me."

"Is not that enough?"

"Certainly. But I bear it willingly. If, in the future, we do not belong to each other, the shame of the overthrow, if I may so express it, will be mine. I have told my secret, and Fräulein Winter will know that it was you who drew back."

They did not go out that day. Their meals were brought to the room, and the waiter and

chambermaid served them with faces expressive of smiling sympathy and secrecy delightful to behold. It was evident that they supposed the couple to be bride and groom, and Paula, who perceived it, was charmed. She was gay, almost playful, to a degree which Gustav had never seen. Intervals of passionate love-making alternated with hours of inexhaustible conversation, which would have done no discredit to the free, brilliant friend of Pericles. One droll conceit crowded upon the heels of another, sensible remarks were followed by a shower of merry, though somewhat hoydenish jests; she spoke of the art exhibitions, of her progress in painting, of the evening parties; she mimicked comically and yet pleasantly, all her acquaintances—not merely their movements, voices, and manner of speech, but even their trains of thought and opinions; while at intervals she had little attacks of sentimentality and quoted stray verses from Heine and Geibel, or sang Russian folk-songs softly in a sweet voice. Then a sort of transport seized Gustav, and he

almost crushed her with his wild caresses till with a comical pout, she struck at him, whispering in his ear with a kiss: "You cannibal." It was the first time that he had experienced such an adventure. During his former little love affairs, when he was a merry Rhine student, yet at the same time a carefully watched "mother's boy," the full power of a woman's charm, with all its demoniac attraction, had never been revealed to him. The feeling which the lion may have when he has dragged his prey into his den, the triumph of undisturbed possession, the tumult of arbitrary delight to satiety, he now learned for the first time, and the situation produced a mood in which all the excitement which poetry and music had ever aroused again echoed. The hours passed as if in a dream, and when darkness closed in, Gustav clasped her in his arms and, pressing a long kiss upon her lips, said, "Are you always so bewitching Paula?"

"If I were with you I should be always as am now," she answered, throwing her ar

around his neck and pressing her head, with its golden curls, upon his breast.

The next day, after dinner, they determined to leave the hotel and see a little of Cologne, with which Paula was not familiar. Gustav did not feel quite comfortable, for he had repeatedly delivered lectures in the city, and was obliged to guard against being seen by acquaintances. But he bravely showed her the cathedral and the Rhine, and the late autumn sunlight even lasted long enough for a hurried visit to the glorious old masters of the Wallraf museum. Time had wings, and, ere they were aware of it, the hour for Paula's departure came. It was very difficult for Gustav, but he was obliged to allude to an extremely prosaic and, as it seemed to him, somewhat ticklish matter.

"Pardon me, Paula, I don't wish to offend your delicacy, but the affair cannot be avoided. You were compelled to make some outlay for the journey—may I know——"

Without a trace of embarrassment, she quietly named a certain sum. It included not

only the berth in the sleeping car, but evidently also the carriage to and from the station. Paula was an accurate accountant.

"Give me your little purse," Gustav whispered in her ear.

She gave it to him and, turning away, with shamefaced, secret movements, he thrust something into it, and kissing her on the eyes, that she might not see, he slipped it back into the pocket of her dress.

"You child," she said, smiling, as she released herself and felt whether it was in the right place.

He was disposed to grow sentimental again at the farewell, but Paula was not at all so.

"Those were two glorious days," he said enthusiastically.

"Yes. And they must be frequently repeated."

"That will be difficult."

"You must make it possible. It is your fault. Now the lioness has tasted blood and *wants more*. You ought not to have yielded

to my caprice. Since you have done it once, I shall constantly want you again."

"Then I shall simply be compelled to learn to oppose your whims."

"I'm not afraid of that, dearest. Now I will never again be more than four weeks without seeing you. I cannot. I came to Cologne with somewhat anxious feelings. I did not know you. It is always a dangerous test to be with a person uninterruptedly thirty-six hours. We weary of most of them in a much shorter time. You have borne the trial splendidly. I go away more in love with you than I came, you darling fellow. But it will impose new duties upon you."

"The old ones take precedence, Paula."

"The new will conquer them, my dearest, have no anxiety on that score. The next time you will come to Berlin."

"Impossible."

"You will come. I tell you so,"

He smiled incredulously. She smiled triumphantly.

It was time to go. They were obliged to

leave the hotel, through the ranks of servants smiling kindly at them, and hasten to the railway station. His train did not start until several hours after hers.

"This time you must think only of me," said Paula, after the last embrace. "Not do as you did in Magdeburg. To be certain of it, I will give you a task. Write poems to me until your departure, and send them this very day. Will you?"

"Yes, Paula," he answered.

The train started. Paula stood at the window of the sleeping-car, gazing with dry, bright eyes at Gustav. He wore a very sorrowful expression, and his eyes were misty as he stood looking after her as long as he could see her; when the train had gone beyond his range of vision he went back to the waiting-room, sat down at a table, and asked for writing materials. His melancholy countenance, required by the rule of art of his part, reacted upon his mood, he wrought himself into the feelings of a passionately enamored swain, *from whom* a cruel parting tears the object of

his love, and after this stimulus to his imagination, powerfully aided by Paula's violet perfume still hovering around him, and the memory of the hours in the comfortable, warm drawing-room of the Cathedral Hotel, it was not difficult for him to write this poem:

"Blessings be on thee, dear Cologne,
Thy faithful shelter we have known;
May the Cathedral and the Rhine
Be blessed, and every stone of thine.

A singing bird will build its nest
Where her foot the earth hath pressed,
A rose exhale its perfume rare
Where my love hath breathed the air.

Song and perfume will proclaim
To distant ages still the same
Words. This sacred spot revere;
Lovers once were happy here!"

Another traveller, who sat opposite to him at the table, gazed wonderingly at Gustav as, while seeking a rhyme, his glance wandered *Sometimes into the distance or upward to the ceiling of the room, then returned to the page,*

on which his faltering hand, with pauses, now and then wrote a short line. Gustav noticed it, and this suggested the second poem:

"Lonely I sit in brooding thought,
My neighbor's eyes with wonder scan
My face, as if he vainly sought—
What grief doth haunt this pallid man?"

His grief is that the hot tears throng
Till they well-nigh his lids o'erflow,
His grief is that he must in song
Express in fitting words this woe.

My heart-throbs he can almost bear,
But verses none will they indite;
In heavy drops falls many a tear—
Alas! my tears no rhymes will write!"

He had now worked himself up completely into the lyrical mood, and without difficulty poured forth ardent verses of complaint and longing. When he flung his letter into the mail-box, it contained six poems. This time Paula had not been a good psychologist. *While his train was bearing him toward the Belgian frontier*, Gustav thought, not of

object of his love, but of his poems; his brain teemed with images and rhymes, and the feeling which kept him awake longest, after he had stretched himself wearily on the seat in his compartment of the railway-carriage, was satisfaction with the poetical work of the last two hours.

CHAPTER V.

FRAU BRUCHSTÄDT was a plain, uncultivated woman, who knew nothing about the amorous novels which constitute a large share of the main object of existence among the upper classes. In her own earnest life there had been no room for what she termed "the follies." Therefore she judged all love affairs with the inexorable harshness of chaste women, who have never known temptation, far less fallen into error. The only relations of the heart which she understood and considered allowable, were those which follow honorable marriage. Irregular relations seemed to her not only immoral, but vulgar beyond measure. She knew that maidservants were gadding about with apprentices and soldiers and that factory-girls coquetted with their sweethearts behind street-doors. In that rank of life such proceedings afforded no cause for

wonder. But that people of education and position, gentlemen and ladies, could behave like train-hands and kitchen-maids, she was unable to understand. Persons who belonged to good society lost caste in her eyes by a doubtful relation, as completely as if they had leaped about publicly on the floor of a common dance-hall, or drunk liquor in a workman's pot-house.)

Therefore it not only caused her deep sorrow, but also intense shame, when she was forced to perceive that her own Gustav, her pride and her joy, was dishonoring himself by an impure connection; for, notwithstanding her inexperience in such matters, she soon divined that he had become entangled in something of the kind.

The daily letters from Berlin, with their abominable perfume, the telegrams, Gustav's tremendous expenditure of money, his journey—there must be a woman at the bottom of all this, and a worthless one; for if it were a respectable girl whom Gustav wished to marry, he would have made her known to his

another in these two months. Nor could she doubt that the affair had commenced in Magdeburg. Who could the miserable person be for whose sake her son, a scholar, a professor, forgot his dignity, and even his filial love? The question ceaselessly occupied her mind and during the two days of his absence her anxiety increased to such anguish—the idea that she was being robbed of her Gustav, that his reputation, his career, his whole future might be seriously endangered, took possession of her mind so completely that she knew no other way of seeking counsel and help than by pouring out her tortured heart to Frau Bärwald. This dear friend had also been in Magdeburg; he lived in Berlin she undoubtedly knew the person in whose net Gustav was snared; she could perhaps help her to release him, or at any rate remove the intolerable uncertainty which makes any threatening danger appear far more terrible than it may possibly be in reality. So she wrote to Frau Bärwald, *be-ailing*, in her clumsy but all the more forcible manner, the complete change in Gustav

since his visit to Magdeburg, his estrangement from her, his extravagant expenditure, his neglect of his official duty, his incomprehensible journey in the middle of a term; she told the story of the daily letters from Berlin and the telegrams, expressed her suspicion that a woman was turning her Gustav's brain, and begged her to tell her frankly what she had heard of this matter in Magdeburg or Berlin.

Gustav had been at home several days after his visit to Cologne when Frau Bärwald's letter arrived. Gossip, she wrote, she mortally detested, but in this case her warm friendship for Frau Bruchstädt and her son rendered it a duty to enlighten the justly anxious mother. She saw with deep pain that the professor was on the verge of committing a folly which must destroy his happiness for life. It was to be hoped that his mother still possessed sufficient influence to withhold him from a step which seemed like suicide. He *had made the acquaintance of an adventuress* —*unfortunately* she and her husband were

partly to blame for it—who had gone to Magdeburg for the special purpose of catching a husband. She was a divorced woman, the mother of two children, nearly as old as the professor, in delicate health, without property of doubtful reputation, and certainly not calculated to make a man happy. She did not know how far the professor had committed himself to this woman. She boasted that he was betrothed to her, and that the marriage would take place in the early spring. But she, Frau Bärwald could not believe it, for she had warned him repeatedly and earnestly against the woman. She thought that a frank word from his mother would open his eyes, and show him the gulf on which he stood.

Frau Bruchstädt's heart stood still as she read this letter. She was alone in her room. Locking the door, she threw herself on her bed, and sobbed and wrung her hands in her despair. Had it gone so far? The whole structure of her future, which she had mentally created, fell with a shock as if hurled down

by an earthquake. Now she understood everything. The journey—was to celebrate the betrothal. Since the summer, there had been an attraction between him and a pretty young girl, Fräulein Alice Fährbach, the only child of a wealthy Frankfort banker, who lived in Brussels. Mutual friends had introduced Gustav to the family, the two young people appeared to be pleased with each other, the parents liked Gustav and all parties concerned regarded an engagement as certain. But, since his journey to Magdeburg, Gustav had shown a strange reluctance to return to the hospitable house where both mother and son had been so cordially welcomed. She now understood why, and was inconsolable over it; for the pretty, kind-hearted, well-bred, and wealthy Alice was the very wife of whom she had dreamed for her Gustav, and he was now in the act of trifling away the happiness of his life—for what? She could not lie quietly on her bed any longer as she thought of it, but *was obliged to pace up and down the room, tottering, striking against all the pieces of*

furniture, like a person who does not know what he is doing.

At last she formed a resolution. She had neither the strength nor the courage to speak frankly to Gustav. She dreaded an explanation. Now she could still hope, still believe in her child. Perhaps everything was not true. But if she required an explicit avowal, and he should tell her that he had thrown himself away, that he had sacrificed himself, his mother, to an adventuress, all would be over and she could not survive that moment. But she might obtain certainty concerning the situation of affairs in a roundabout way. She had an excellent opportunity. Frau Fährbach had called and, for the sake of being sure of them, invited her and her son to spend Christmas Eve; expressing on this occasion her regret that his visits had been so rare during the past two months. At supper, Frau Bruchstädt, who during the interval had been trying to recover her calmness, told her son about Frau Fährbach's call, and the Christmas *invitation*.

"You didn't accept it. mother dear?" asked Gustav quickly.

"I could not without consulting you, but we will go, shall we not?"

"No, mother; I would rather spend Christmas at home, alone with you. I want no strangers on that day."

"Strangers! We all believe that Alice will remain no stranger to you."

"What do you mean by that, mother?" he cried, his face betraying unpleasant surprise.

"I wonder at your question, child. You know very well why Professor Dugué's wife introduced us at the Fährbachs'. You know, too, that the family credit you with serious intentions. And Alice is rich beautiful, highly educated. you will never find a better wife."

"Say no more on that subject, mother, I beseech you. I hope that my conduct has warranted no one in drawing false conclusions. But since the matter is so regarded, I will never set foot in the house again, at any rate."

"*But why, Gustav? I don't understand*

you. You fairly thrust your good fortune from you."

"Mother, you don't understand," he answered soothingly, with a somewhat forced smile. "Fräulein Fährbach is a dear, sweet girl, but I do not love her."

"Oh, nonsense about your silly love!" exclaimed Frau Bruchstädt, wrathfully. "You are no child, and ought to talk like a sensible man. Alice is an excellent match——"

"Once more, mother," he vehemently interrupted, "that is enough. I will not sell myself. I have showed you that I can earn bread for us both, even without a rich wife. So leave me in peace."

Frau Bruchstädt now knew enough. Large tears rolled down her face. Gustav tried to comfort her, kissed her hands and her cheeks. She struggled a few minutes, but could control herself no longer, and, laying her fork down, burst into sobs and left the dining-room.

Gustav remained alone in a very uneasy mood. It grieved him sorely to cause his *mother* sorrow, but he could not marry for her

sake! To return to Alice with an ardent letter from Paula in his pocket, and an equally fervent reply in his mind, seemed to him abominable treachery to the young girl, who had not deserved such base treatment from him. For he had really not been wholly indifferent to her, and perhaps would have sought her hand if this unexpected adventure with Paula had not interposed. Paula had promised to dismiss Kornemann, but hitherto did not appear to have kept her word. He had promised nothing; but he would have despised himself if he had continued the relations commenced with a respectable girl, while he was exchanging love-letters with Paula. Since the meeting at Cologne these letters had become still more ardent. Formerly the material for fostering them had always been somewhat scanty. Now the thirty-six hours which they had spent in the most intimate companionship afforded a thousand connecting links. Paula seemed enraptured with *Gustav's* personality, and the bliss of love which she had found with him. "I am new-

born," she wrote. "My life begins with the Friday morning in the Cologne station. All that went before is effaced. Until now I dreaded the future, I did not wish to think of it. Then I asked myself: 'How will this end?' I found no answer, and felt that my heart was heavy. The 24th of March seemed veiled in a mist of anxiety. Now all is changed. I am calm and happy. I know that you are mine, and will remain so. And the 24th of March lies before me bright as sunshine, a true beginning of spring."

Gustav dared not permit her to remain in so confident a mood. He felt it his duty to warn her gently, and did so, though with consideration. She must not forget their agreement and anticipate the decision. She must constantly say to herself that human hearts, especially women's hearts, are incalculable, and during a period of nearly four months everything might yet change. It would be perilous to lull herself prematurely in security, from which one might easily awake to painful *disappointment*.

Paula received this jet of cold water more calmly than he had expected. "A disappointment," she wrote, "cannot be experienced, because I do not deceive myself. Your heart can no longer recede, and your reason has never been opposed to me. And I believe that your reason rules your heart. Whatever your decision in four months and a half may be, it cannot change the fact that I am now having happy days. I love you, and wish to be loved in return, though it is only until early spring. What you give me now, no one can take, and I am content. You need not constantly remind me of the agreement, I am not offending against it by being happy now. Do not prevent my drinking full draughts from the magic goblet of your love; it is so sweet. How the dregs will taste is a matter of no importance, so long as I have not yet reached them."

When she spoke in this way his conscience had nothing with which to reproach him, and *he could continue* to give her the love-potion *as lavishly as she desired*. But Paula was no

easily satisfied and, in every letter, asked him to come to Berlin. He had no duties at Christmas-time and must devote his holidays to her. Besides, it was so hard to see each other but once a month, when they lived only in the minutes in which they were together. Gustav objected. He could not leave his mother alone on Christmas Eve.

"I am really jealous even of your mother," Paula answered. "You ought to hold no one dearer than myself. But I'll forgive you this time. You shall not be compelled to choose between your mother and me. Your heart would bleed, if you were obliged to sacrifice your mother, mine, if you could sacrifice me. So it is better to spare you the conflict. Am I kind, dearest?"

"Yes, you are kind," Gustav wrote in reply, and entreated her, although he could not come, at least to be permitted to give her presents. He was unskilled in divining what might please a beautiful young woman, and a list of articles she would like would be a welcome assistance. Paula did not require

urging. The list came, and was admirably complete.

Neither the two children nor Fräulein Winter were forgotten, in fact no one was omitted. For herself she desired a ring with a ruby, her favorite stone. Not a "cheap and poor" one, but something pretty and suitable, worthy of himself and of her. She was a judge of gems and it would not be easy to impose upon her. What she would think of a ring which she received from him might be a matter of indifference to him. Or should she tell him?

No, she did not need to tell him. He hastened to execute her commissions. He was somewhat startled when the jeweller told him what a ring with a beautiful ruby cost, but he would not show himself a niggard. For the first time in his life, he incurred a debt. To ask his mother for money to make his purchases was not to be thought of. So he left his visiting-card at the shop, and requested him not to send the account until after New Year's day. When he received his salary in *January* he did not give Frau Bruchstädt the

full amount, as heretofore, but only a portion. When she looked at him in surprise, he said with forced indifference:

"Your housekeeping money, mother dear."

"And the rest?"

"Locked up, of course."

"Indeed," she said, looking her son in the face. He averted his eyes and pretended to be busied at his writing desk.

"It is your own money, and you owe me no account," she said at last, after a long pause, and, as he made no answer, slowly left the room. Gustav uttered a sigh of relief. He had a feeling of exhaustion, as if he had just performed a very arduous, difficult, and dangerous task. Yet it must be so. He must attain his majority, and it was better for his mother's peace of mind if she did not know and ponder over every penny he expended.

Paula had been delighted and touched by his gifts, and forgave him for not having come at Christmas. But now the holidays were over, now he no longer had the excuse that *he must devote himself to his mother: if he*

oved her even a little bit, he would not leave her to languish longer. She had come to Cologne at his first hint, and showed him that she would make any sacrifice for him. But he seemed willing to do nothing for her. Was this the love which he daily filled pages in protesting? And day by day she repeated the entreaties, the reproaches, the complaints that she was ill from pining for him, and could find no rest until she had seen him.

There was great discord in Gustav's feelings. He had determined not to go to Berlin; first, on account of his mother, who could not fail to be seriously troubled by these mysterious absences, and secondly, because he did not wish to yield to the whims of a tyrannical woman. She must see that she could not have her way with all men, that she need not merely reckon with her little finger to have him follow weakly. But then he said to himself: Was this the proper opportunity to show his strength? Was it so heroic, so praiseworthy, to *cause her pain*? She loved him. She *longed to see him*; she was happy when she

had him for a few hours. Besides, this whole love-dream would not last long. On the 24th of March it would be over—oh yes, certainly it would. Until then he owed her at least as much compassion and indulgence as the circumstances permitted. She had declared that she expected nothing from the future, the present sufficed. Was it not his duty to render this brief present as bright as possible? Finally, it was a peculiarly elevating thought to be able to afford a human being perfect, complete happiness. It made the dispenser better and prouder himself, endowed him for the moment with the fairest prerogative of the Deity. He involuntarily carried the idea farther, and suddenly caught himself imagining a scene in which he appeared before the anxious, despairing Paula, clasped her in his arms, and said:

“I have decided. I will fold you into my life. Be mine forever,” whereupon she uttered a shriek of joy and sank senseless at his feet. It must be a wondrous vision—but he instantly thrust it vehemently from his

ind. No, no. That was sheer madness. Purely artistic pleasure in a charming scene could not be carried so far as to forfeit the happiness of a life. Marry her? Never. He did not even love her. But she loved him, and he ought to be grateful to her for it. So he resolved to go to Berlin—out of tenderness, chivalrous generosity, as he persuaded himself. That the pleasant gratification of knowing himself beloved by a beautiful woman, and the memory of the rapture of the days in Cologne, had a share in the decision, he was scarcely clearly conscious himself. At least he did not admit it.

His resistance had lasted more than four weeks, but now all the arrangements were made for the journey, which he had finally promised to take at the end of January. He could not remain in Berlin more than twenty-four hours. His, with the travelling to and fro, made a three days' absence from Brussels. Paula engaged a room for him near her apartments, and conveyed him to and from the station. *He was with her all day.* She denied herself

to all visitors, no one interrupted them, no one needed to see him, and he at last knew her in her daily surroundings, her usual life.

Not until the day that he was to leave Brussels on the 11:10 train, did he say to his mother, at supper, in a tone of assumed indifference, as if he were telling her something absolutely trivial:

"I wanted to say—you know, mother dear, that I am going away this evening. But I shall stay only three days."

Frau Bruchstädt turned very pale, and asked in a trembling voice:

"Indeed! And—where are you going?"

Gustav hesitated slightly, then answered: "To Berlin."

"Ah! And—what calls you to Berlin?"

"I must go," he answered evasively. "I am expected."

Frau Bruchstädt could now control herself no longer. All the pent-up bitterness of the last four months overflowed with a sudden outburst.

"Gustav," she shrieked, "you are going

again to the miserable person who has bewitched you. Gustav! Don't throw yourself away! Have pity on yourself and your old mother."

"Mother! Why do you talk so?"

"Why do I talk so? Do you think me blind and deaf? Do you suppose I don't see what is passing around me? You would tell me nothing. I was obliged to ask others. I know all. You are lost. You have betrothed yourself to a worthless adventuress; a sickly, wretched, elderly wanton; a beggar who drove her husband away, and wants you to lift her out of the mire with her children, whose father is heaven knows who. Gustav, Gustav! have I reared you, have I grown old for this?"

She wrung her hands and sobbed pitifully.

Every one of his mother's words pierced Gustav's heart like a dagger-thrust. It seemed as if he must avenge this vulgar abuse of Paula without delay, at the present moment; but how could he do so, upon his mother? Starting up, he stepped before the old lady, *and said in a tremulous voice:*

"Mother, you are committing a heavy

"And you? And you?" she passionately interrupted.

"Some one has slandered the lady as to you. It is all untrue."

"What is untrue?"

"First of all, that I am betrothed to her."

"But she says so herself. She boasts of it."

"I simply do not believe it."

"Then Frau Bärwald has lied."

Gustav paused in surprise. He did not expect to hear his friend's name at this moment.

"It is true, you unhappy child, it is true. O God, O God! that I must experience this. Child, child, consider! Be my Gustav! I have no one in the world but you. Do not cast off your mother for a wanton."

"Mother!" he exclaimed, in a voice whose tone was ominous of anger. But Frau Bärwald had lost every remnant of self-control and was again completely the woman of the people, with her natural passionateness of language wholly destitute of the varnish of education.

"For a wanton," she shrieked still louder than he, stamping her foot furiously, "for a shameless wanton! For that she is and nothing else. Don't you see that she only came to Magdeburg to catch you? And, like a simpleton, you let yourself be caught."

He could listen to the abuse no longer, and made a movement to leave the room. Then his mother threw herself at his feet, clasped his knees, and raising her gray head and sorrowful face, down which tears were streaming, groaned from her breaking heart:

"Gustav, you will not do this to me. If you marry her, I will leave the house. I cannot witness it. I would rather die among strangers."

His mother's despair was unendurable to Gustav. Deeply agitated and crushed, he raised the sobbing woman, stroked her hair and cheeks and, choked with emotion, said:

"Mother, you are making yourself and me ill. And what is the cause of all this? Who tells you that I intend to marry? There has *never been any question of it.*"

Frau Bruchstädt released herself from his embrace, and said amid her tears:

"Then let the person go. What is the use of so many letters? And the terrible amount of money which you squander for her? And these journeys?"

"Mother, you don't understand."

"If it were anything honest I should understand already, or you could explain it. If you can't, it is, at any rate, something wrong, which ought not to be. Promise me that you will not go to Berlin, Gustav."

Gustav silently turned away.

"Gustav, you will not go," she repeated, clinging to him again.

"I must," he answered in a troubled tone.

She released him, and again threw herself on the floor, which her gray head struck heavily. Gustav raised the struggling, wailing woman, and, while large tears fell from his own eyes, said:

"Consider how unreasonable you are, mother. Let us talk sensibly to each other. *Either* you believe me, when I say that I do

not love the lady—then surely you need not fear that I shall marry her, and all your excitement is foolish; or you believe that I do love the lady enough to marry her, in spite of everything against it—then certainly you must regard me as half crazy, and should have some pity for me, and not treat me harshly and unlovingly.”

“I must save you.”

“That would not be the way to do so, mother.”

She made no answer, but wept quietly.

“Be calm,” Gustav continued. “I love no one but you, and you may trust me.”

“Then you won’t go?”

“Mother, once more, have confidence. The journey means nothing.”

“You are lost, Gustav,” she sobbed, with fresh vehemence. “You use fine words, but it is all lies and deceit. I no longer have a child. God has taken the last one from me. I do not know by what sin I have deserved it. He is punishing me too severely. O God! O God!”

Gustav could listen to this no longer, and left the room. This time his mother let him go. From the very depths of his heart he cursed the journey and the whole affair, but he believed that he could not draw back now. Paula certainly did not deserve the insults with which his mother had loaded her. This shame was inflicted upon her for his sake, on account of her great, sinful love for him. He owed her compensation, and such was the visit to Berlin.

So he quitted his home without having seen his mother again, and, during the whole journey, throughout the sleepless night which he spent on the railroad, he wrought himself into a mood of defiance toward her which made the scene before the departure more endurable.

Paula a wanton! Fie, fie! She was an unfortunate woman whom life had dealt with harshly. An adventuress! What abominable injustice! Perhaps she had really gone to Magdeburg with the design of angling for a husband; at any rate, she had not treated him *so for a moment*. There was neither calcula-

tion nor wile in her manner toward him. People who are trying to catch a husband do not begin with, as it were, throwing themselves away at the first meeting. So gross an error would not be committed by a woman so clever, so accustomed to society, so cool, so equal to every situation as Paula. When she threw herself into his arms with such bewildering passion, it was the best proof of her love. If she had had the slightest selfish intention, she would not have been so foolish as to play her largest trump as the first card. His mother had done very wrong to insult her. His mother was wrong altogether; for if she supposed that he loved Paula madly enough to marry her, she ought not to mortally wound him by coarse remarks against the object of his affections. That was not maternal love. That was no comprehension, no consideration for the feelings of the child. He repeated these thoughts to himself with a sort of obstinacy, until he had persuaded himself that his conduct was perfectly justifiable.

In Berlin, Paula, closely veiled, was waiting

for him at the station. She only pressed his hand nervously, and hastened with him to the carriage. Not until they were seated inside, and it began to roll along, did she throw back her veil and seek his lips, clinging to them until her breath failed.

"It was such an anxious time when I was waiting for the train. So many acquaintances. One is so easily noticed. But now we are safe." She snatched her hat from her head and thrust it carelessly into the corner of the carriage, that she might nestle close to Gustav.

When the first hunger for caresses was appeased, Paula drew off the glove from her left hand, and raising her ring-finger to the level of his eyes, asked:

"Do you know that, you dear fellow?"

It was the ruby ring.

Gustav smilingly kissed the pretty finger.

Paula touched her lips to the place where his had lingered, and said:

"It ought not to be just a gold hoop?"

Gustav made an undecided gesture.

"I am a child," she murmured, smiling; "true; you have no experience in these things." After a brief silence, she continued:

"But you ought to have had something engraved. Your name and mine. And the date."

"What date?"

"You are right again. I am very stupid to-day. We don't know it yet."

Paula drove Gustav first to the woman at whose house she had engaged a room for him—her brother, she said—waited in the drawing-room till he had freed himself from the dust of the journey, and then went the short distance to her own home with him on foot.

At her ring, the door was opened by a pretty young lady, who embraced Paula and, smiling pleasantly, made a graceful courtesy to Gustav.

"Fräulein Winter," said Paula, presenting him, "our little guardian spirit."

"Oh, you Lorelei," replied the girl, laughing, and pressed Paula's hand as if she were in love with her.

Gustav felt somewhat embarrassed by the

merry eyes which watched him very close. But Fräulein Winter was entirely at ease, like an old friend who regarded everything which passed around her as perfectly natural. Even her movement revealed her extreme satisfaction in being made cognizant of a secret, and permitted to aid a hidden love affair.

"I gave my maid permission to go away until to-morrow," said Paula, while Gus was taking off his overcoat, "and Fräulein Winter has put the children to bed. We shall now be entirely uninterrupted."

The table was laid in the room. "You must take things as they come, dearest," said Paula, motioning him to the chair opposite. "You will get nothing but tea, cold meat, eggs, and a sweet dish. I thought you would rather have me treat you without ceremony."

"Thank you, Paula," he answered, pressing her hand.

At the meal a surprise awaited him. The tea-cup which stood before him bore the inscription in gilt letters: "Gustav Bruchstäck" and on the opposite side: "Welcome."

flushed crimson, and murmured: "Oh—Paula—what an idea—when did you have it made?"

Paula, who was gloating over his emotion, replied:

"I ordered the cup when I knew that you were coming. It shall be a souvenir in future of your first entrance into Paula's home."

An hour later, Fräulein Winter who, up to that time, had remained with them, silently retired, leaving the two alone. It was fully midnight when Paula gave Gustav the key of the house-door and sent him away. But he was obliged to promise to come as early as seven the next morning.

The following day Fräulein Winter opened the door and pressed his hand familiarly in the antechamber. "You know the way, Herr Professor," she said, with a peculiar smile, and let him go in alone to Paula, who, still in bed, stretched out both arms to him.

At breakfast, about two hours later, Gustav for the first time saw Paula's children, who were called in to bid their mother and the new friend good-morning before going with Fräu-

lein Winter to the house of a family of their acquaintance, where they were to spend the whole Sunday. They looked at Gustav very curiously, at first shyly, but soon grew bolder when their mother encouraged them and Gustav drew them kindly toward him. The older boy could already talk sensibly about his school and his Christmas presents, but the younger was too small to understand anything but caresses and merry rides on the knees.

When they had gone, Gustav at last succeeded in looking at the suite of apartments. The dining-room appeared also to serve as a drawing-room, and the chamber as a studio. These two were in front. Paula did not take him to the bedrooms occupied by Fräulein Winter and the children, which looked out upon the courtyard. The place had a Bohemian aspect—the word slovenly would be a trifle too strong—which impressed Gustav very unpleasantly. The furniture was extremely scanty, and yet was pretentious rubbish; the sofa and armchairs were covered with red velvet and had gilt frames, but were shabby and

on the edges; there were small inlaid
bles, but their tops were scratched and
racked. Little worthless articles were scat-
tered everywhere, german favors and ball
souvenirs, that were evidently intended to do
duty for fashionable "*bibelots*." Gustav had
certainly not been born with a silver spoon in
his mouth and reared in the laps of duchesses.
In his childhood he had known want, in his
youth poverty. But though accustomed to pro-
vincial simplicity, he was also to absolute clean-
liness, rigid order, and proud acknowledg-
ment of industrious poverty, and had no taste
for shabby gentility, and the artistic effect of
negligence and motley confusion. His train-
ing in swift observation led him to notice
many other things. On one wall hung a large
oil-painting, representing Paula in a very low-
necked ball-dress. It was signed "Korne-
mann." Upon a bureau, in studied confusion,
lay numberless photographs of young and el-
derly men, often with very gallant dedications,
among them his own, which he had been
obliged to have taken solely for her. On

broad window-sill there were ash-holders and a Japanese dish containing half-smoked cigarettes. Did men smoke with her? Did she smoke? Both were an unbearable abomination to him.

Gustav was confined to the house all that Sunday. He dared not venture into the street, that he might not be recognized in the neighborhood where he had so many acquaintances. Bärwald lived only four hundred paces from Paula's residence. When he thought of his friend, and the game of hide-and-seek he was playing with him, a burden weighed upon his heart. But Paula took care that he should not have much time to devote to reflection. She was constantly hovering around him or seated in his lap, and the time which was not devoted to caresses she filled with lively chatter. She brought out mementos, pictures, letters, and told anecdotes concerning them. For instance, she showed the likeness of an ordinarily good-looking young man, and said:

"Just think, Gustav; this gentleman shot *himself* five days ago."

"Why?"

"It is not known yet. He was well, prosperous, fond of life and, so far as strangers could see, happy. In their search for a motive people said: 'Unhappy love.' And for me!" she added.

As Gustav looked at her with surprise, she went on quickly:

"Of course, that's sheer nonsense. He paid me attention, like everybody else, but love was never mentioned between us. Then I hear suddenly that he has committed suicide. He had been with me a great deal. I felt obliged to attend the funeral. I was dressed entirely in black, with a long black veil. When I left the carriage in the cemetery, and approached the open grave, a thrill of horror evidently ran through the others who were present at the burial. They drew back on both sides, making way for me. I walked slowly, almost floated forward between the ranks, without looking at any one, only gazing with fixed, dilated eyes into vacancy. Then my pale cheeks, the black dress, the

crêpe, I looked like a Niobe. The whole affair did not actually concern me at all, but the scene was so wonderfully pathetic, the people all appeared to be so deeply moved by the sight of me, the report that he had died for my sake was so evidently in the thoughts of all, that it seized and overpowered me also. I tottered mechanically to the open grave and sank beside it. Those who were nearest caught me in their arms, they devoted themselves to me; I was the centre of attention in the whole funeral ceremonial; people said, with agitated faces, "Come, madam, you ought not to stay here," and I allowed myself to be led slowly back to the carriage like a helpless child. I was completely exhausted by it the next day. What do you say to that, my darling?"

"I say that you can throw yourself into a part with uncomfortable perfection."

"Yes. I have always said that a great actress was lost in me."

This story made Gustav unusually reflective. He did not dwell upon the absurdity of her

calm, as it were objective, self-reflection and self-admiration; for a more serious thought occupied his mind. A faint suspicion was dawning that her love for him might also be mere acting. If this were the case he need not commiserate himself, for what was he doing save playing upon her feelings? What a punishment for him to be paid in the same coin! What a pitiable fool he would then be to have been guilty of all these absurdities and falsehoods out of sensitive consideration for a passion which had no more actual existence than his own!

Paula also spoke repeatedly of the future, mentioning the 24th of March as an appointed holiday, the fixed date of her formal betrothal, until, in his increasing impatience, he was at last unable to refrain from mildly remonstrating:

"We do not yet know anything at all of the future, which is not to be decided until the 24th of March."

"I have already decided," said Paula, with *a triumphant* smile, kissing him.

"I have not," replied Gustav.

"Why, why," she answered, in a jesting tone. "I even believe, Professor, that you are rattling the chain and trying to release yourself."

"I have no occasion to do so," he said gravely, "for I am not yet bound."

"Do you really think so?"

"That is the distinct agreement."

"The letter kills, the spirit makes alive. According to form you are not bound, according to reality you are. Do not struggle, my Gustav. Rather begin to accommodate yourself in mind to our mutual life."

"You do not see one great obstacle, Paula?"

"What is that?"

"My mother."

"Why should she be an obstacle?"

"She is an old lady, and has her own ideas. Her ideal of a daughter-in-law is entirely unlike you. More conventional, more shallow, but unlike. She would never feel kindly toward you."

"Let that be my care. I will win the dea:

lady in a week. It would be the first time, if I did not succeed when I made the attempt."

"My mother is not a man."

"Women do not resist me any more than men, you uncivil bear."

"I do not share your confidence."

Paula became irritable. "Very well. In that case, you are of age, and need not consult your mother."

"Hush, Paula, hush, you don't know what my mother is to me. I owe everything to her. She has toiled for me, she has supported me, she has sacrificed her whole life for my sake. I can never thank and reward her for it sufficiently. But at least I can give her old age peace and content. Before I would cause her sorrow, I would a thousand times rather tear the heart out of my breast."

"Do not excite yourself," said Paula soothingly, when she saw him so deeply agitated. "You imagine bugbears which will never be realized. You stupid, clumsy men can do *nothing* but run plump against an obstacle. *With you* it is always bend or break. Th

method, of course, causes bruises and wounds. We women manage more skilfully. We know how to go around an impediment, without hurting it or ourselves. Trust your Paula, and be of good courage, Gustav."

The time did not pass so swiftly for him in Berlin as in Cologne, but a winter day is short, and the hour of parting soon struck. Paula went to the station with him and wanted to stay until the train started; but it made him nervous when he saw her constantly glancing in all directions lest a familiar face should appear, and he begged her to go. After some display of reluctance she yielded and, with a long pressure of the hand, left him. "Farewell," she said, "always remember that I love you. And the next time you come, you will bring a message of joy."

CHAPTER VI.

THE first thing Gustav did after his return was to write to Bärwald a letter of gentle reproach, in which he complained that Frau Bärwald had gossiped to his mother about Frau Ehrwein, and thus rendered her seriously uneasy.

"I can see nothing worthy of censure in Hedwig's letter to your mother," was Bärwald's reply. "We were both amazed to perceive, by your mother's communication, that you had not yet told her anything. I think it was your duty to inform her, since the affair had progressed so far. You ought to have told yourself that she would learn it sooner or later from another source, if you did not announce it to her. I do not understand your secrecy. Your mother surely must know it *when you marry*. As to your resolution itself, *permit me to maintain my previous reserve*

You have asked no advice, and therefore I have none to give you. Finally, you are old enough and sensible enough to know what you are doing. You probably did not expect my approval, and it is not a necessary condition of your happiness. The latter I wish you with all my heart, and am the more desirous to avoid disturbing you with doubts; because it is already too late to change anything in the accomplished facts."

Gustav instantly replied that it was perfectly incomprehensible why Bärwald should speak of accomplished facts. If he had formed so important a resolution as a betrothal, he would probably have communicated it to his dearest and oldest friend. There was not the most remote question of it. Frau Ehrwein and he had become friends in Magdeburg; he cherished feelings of warm and respectful regard for her, but there was nothing of importance in the matter.

Bärwald's answer came without delay. "Forgive an old friend's sincerity," he wrote, "but your letter of February 7th completely

puzzles me. I had the information of the betrothal from Frau Ehrwein herself. After receiving your reply, I went to her to call her to account. Perhaps you will consider this an unwarranted interference, but you and your affairs are sufficiently important to me to justify this step to my own conscience. Frau Ehrwein, after a few evasions, admitted that a formal betrothal had not taken place. This lifted a heavy burden from my heart, for it relieved you of the guilt of actual falsehood. But when I seriously remonstrated with the lady about the recklessness with which she herself was circulating such inventions, she only listened silently, though with a peculiar smile and, instead of answering, opened a drawer which was filled to overflowing with your letters. A chill ran through my veins when I saw the piles. You cannot have done anything for months except write to Frau Ehrwein. She fished out a few haphazard from the heap, and gave them to me to read. *Gustav*—well, I will say nothing more. You now best what you have written to the lady

You say there is nothing of importance in the matter. Friend, that does not agree. In that case, people do not write letters fairly blazing with ardor. I should be glad to find mitigating circumstances for your conduct, and will see in it only the proof that you conceal the real state of affairs from me because you rightly feel what a stupendous folly you will commit if you marry Frau Ehrwein. So far as lies in your power, release yourself from her. She is certainly a pretty creature, but no wife for you. I only fear—I fear—that it is useless to preach reason to a man so thoroughly in love as you must be, according to your letters."

Gustav was benumbed when he read these lines. How could she show his letters to strangers, even if they were the most intimate friends! How could she thus expose herself and him! Did she not say herself that he was not yet anything more than a happy lover? Does a woman boast of such relations? Did she forget that he had a right to break off his connection with her on the 24th of March? And

if he did, how would she stand then? Her conduct could be explained only by her foolish belief that her charms were irresistible. Yet was it not monstrous that vanity should make her forget all prudence and caution? He would tell her his opinion. He would free his soul from the intense humiliation inflicted by Bärwald, by writing Paula a vehement letter. Yet, at last, he did not do it. Of what avail would it be? In six weeks all would be over, and until then it was not worth while to quarrel with her. It was more sensible to use no minor matters as pretexts, but at the appointed date sever the relation for important motives.

In this mood he was by no means accessible to Paula's skilful flatteries. She wrote what a great impression he had made upon her children and Fräulein Winter. The young lady was completely in love with him, and raved so foolishly over the handsome pale professor that she was almost jealous. And the little boys never ceased talking about him. They asked her when he would come again, *and why he had gone away so soon; the older*

one wanted his likeness to put on his desk inquired why the professor had such a beautiful voice and such handsome eyes, and when she would not send him to Brussels, he would like to live with him a while; in short, with the little home which Gustav now knew every one dreamed and talked of him all and the memory of him was imprinted upon all living beings as well as the inanimate things.

Gustav did not believe that he could have produced such an impression on little thoughtless children as she alleged, and her evident intention of tickling his vanity humiliated him. Again he felt the doubt which, during Paula's description of her appearance at suicide's funeral, had flashed for the first time through his brain: as she tried to impress upon him with descriptions of the admiration of the children and the governess for him, might also deceive him in other things.

It was not only this suspicion which left him in a very uncomfortable state. All *happiness and peace* had vanished from his

which was now pervaded with the chill and desolation of the grave. Frau Bruchstädt did not talk with her son, and avoided looking at him. During the meals she sat opposite to him at the table, but the rest of the time she remained alone in her room. She grew pale and thin, her eyes were dull and almost always misty with tears; she aged visibly, and glided about like a shadow on the wall. At last Gustav could bear it no longer, and one day, late in February when, as was now her custom, she softly entered the dining-room and took her seat in silence, he started up, hastily went to her, took her gray head in his arms, and said in a trembling voice: "Mother dear, be kind again."

She did not try to release herself, but neither did she make any movement of response. Resting her head on his breast, she began to weep quietly. Gustav kissed her closed eyes, and continued:

"Mother, you will break my heart."

"*You have broken mine,*" she sighed, *almost inaudibly.*

"Be sensible, mother, you are causing you and myself needless sorrow. Nothing has happened, and nothing will happen which need make you anxious."

"The perfumed letters come every day."

"Don't let that disturb you, mother. It will be over on the 24th of March."

Frau Bruchstädt looked up in surprise. "Why just then?"

"Don't ask an explanation. You have no experience in such things——"

"Thank heaven!" she interposed.

—"and would not understand me. In the circles in which you have not lived and do not know, many things are different from what you imagine."

"You need not reproach me with my origin," said Frau Bruchstädt bitterly, drawing herself away from him. "I know that I am plain woman. I would have wished you more aristocratic, better-educated mother. But you will not have to be ashamed of me much longer."

"Mother," Gustav interrupted, pressing her

more closely to his heart, "Mother, you are ill, or you would not talk so. I owe you everything that I am and have, and no king need be ashamed of you."

As she made no answer, Gustav continued:
 "Three weeks will soon be over. Then you will be convinced that you have no reason to grieve. Surely you can have confidence in me so long."

The truth is that she could only half trust him, for the letters, those unlucky letters, with their shameless violet fragrance, came with the wonted regularity—often even twice a day. Paula was rapturously in love, thrilling with passion and confident happiness, full of dreams and plans for the glorious future now so close at hand. Gustav ventured several times to warn and prepare her, but he did it so timidly, so cautiously and vaguely that it made no impression. He intimated that his mother's opposition was unyielding, he betrayed that he was madly jealous of her past and would receive a stab in the heart every time that he *was obliged* to see her children, but as he al-

ways hastened to add that he loved her unspeakably, she dwelt only upon the last words, did not heed what preceded them, and at the utmost scoffed pleasantly at his scruples.

Thus the second half of March approached.

"What a week!" Paula wrote on Tuesday, eight days before the 24th. "I am standing at the bar. Life or death? What is your mood? How much am I to you? And when we have decided, what days will follow? Strange hours! It seems as if I were dreaming. You poor fellow. I pity you infinitely. Pity, if you must renounce your happiness, pity also if you destroy your future by placing it in the hands of an invalid wife."

"Needless pity," thought Gustav, but nevertheless wrote a letter to her overflowing with tenderness.

"I must stop in the midst of my work," she wrote on the 19th; "I have been reading your letter received to-day, and feel a mad longing for you. If I had you now, I would bite your *white breast* for joy. Here the sun is shining *brightly*, presaging happiness. For five days

more I will still behold the sun without and within. You call me a sweet creature. Am I? Will you always think so? I believe it."

On the 20th she again mentioned how little Stephan, her younger boy, asked constantly for him, and added: "A week from to-day I shall have your letter. One ought really to sleep for a week. Gusti, Gusti, give me calmness. The torturing unrest—the ardent longing—six months like these consume life. Yet what does it matter? The sun is shining. The most beautiful spring is opening."

On the 21st she sent a letter which Gregor, the older boy, had written, "entirely of his own inclination." "When will you come to us again?" it ran. "The next time you must stay a long while, for we love you very dearly." Paula added: "I am living in a state of stupor. I am both happy and miserable. I don't wish to rouse myself. You will do that. Decide freely—I will accommodate myself bravely to your resolution, whatever it may be."

Gustav uttered a sigh of relief.

Two more letters arrived before the 24th of March. On the 22d Paula wrote: "You will receive one more letter from me to-morrow. Then I must keep silence and wait. I love you very dearly. Do you believe it?" And on the 23d: "I send my greetings, Gusti. Read them twice, thrice, and say to yourself all that it is impossible for me to utter to-day, now. PAULA."

On the 22d of March, Gustav wrote to her for the last time in his usual strain of exaggeration, saying at the close: "I shall not write to-morrow. The day must be devoted to serious self-examination. But on the day after, love, you will hear from me."

The hour of decision had now come. It really was none for him; he had known all the past six months what he meant to do, and at the utmost had had only a few seconds' wavering, which proceeded from moments of self-deception. The only unspeakably cruel difficulty was to find the fitting words for what he *had to communicate*. He had always been

ware that it would not be an easy matter to bring the adventure to a peaceful and seemly termination. But he had never imagined it to be so difficult as the reality proved. Falsehood has its logic as well as truth. With iron inflexibility it leads far beyond the point to which the liar originally desired to go. There is but one way for the sinner to break the spell which holds him captive, a frank admission of guilt. But how many people have the moral courage to make the redeeming confession: "I have lied"? Gustav did not possess it. On one point his mind was made up, that he could not write to Paula: "It was all a farce. Let the cruel sport close. I do not love you, and all is at an end between us." This was not honesty, but cynicism. Paula had heart disease. Such an abrupt knock on the head might have serious consequences, and no dictate of truthfulness could force him to become a murderer. Even if he desired to do so, he was even less willing now, than six months ago, to humiliate her in her own eyes by openly telling her that she was unable to

inspire him with love. She must believe herself beloved. She must retain the consolation that he withdrew, not because her charm was not strong enough to bind him, but because outward circumstances were still strong. These were the motives of his acts which he admitted to himself. But in the shadowy background of his thoughts, other forces were acting which he perceived only vaguely, because he intentionally avoided fixing his eyes intently upon them. For months, Paula had daily called him her angel, her god. She admired as much as she loved him. It was a delightful feeling to live in the soul of a beautiful woman as a supernatural being, surrounded by a golden halo of saintship. He did not wish to lose his aureole. He did not desire to be flung down from the altar an ordinary man among the common herd of human beings. In a woman's eyes the principal quality of a lofty, exceptional nature is constancy of love. The true hero to a woman is "one of *Afra, who die if they love;*" on the contrary *nothing is more base than the transitory*

of this feeling—in a man, of course. If he told Paula that he no longer loved her, she would despise him as a base nature; if he told her that he had never loved her, she would despise him still more as a hypocrite and a liar. But she must not scorn him. In short, his real, unconfessed feeling was this: true, the relation must end, and he become free, but he would still remain the hero of love and loyalty he had hitherto appeared, and Paula should adore him as before.

So, on Tuesday afternoon, after receiving Paula's last lines, which resembled an ejaculatory prayer, he sat down and wrote the following letter:

"DEAR, DEAR PAULA:

"After two sleepless nights, two days of the keenest anguish of soul, in which I have suffered in advance all the sorrow that the lines I write to-day can cause you, I now see, with fatal clearness, where my duty lies, and *which path I must enter*. I have struggled *against my own point of view until all my powers were exhausted, but resistance is fu*

tile. The word which I must utter will destroy my own happiness for life, but fate compels me to pronounce it. My worshipped Paula, I must give you up, you cannot be mine for life. Do not ask my reasons; they are stronger than my will, and my boundless love for you is powerless against them. Through you, I have known the most glorious emotion; you have unspeakably enriched my life, and I can never again be absolutely poor, for the remembrance of you will abide with me. Before I knew you, I cared little for women. Henceforth they will be nothing to me. My life will now be dark and melancholy, you will remain the only bright star in it. I have had a sweet dream. It has vanished. I must pursue my toilsome way without you. Forget the lonely, sorrowful wanderer, or think of him pitiingly, without resentment. You are a radiant creature, Paula. You are created to diffuse happiness. You will yet find it yourself and, I hope, soon cease to feel my loss. Do I really desire this? I will not venture to confess to myself what I actually desire. Farewell, my Paula; you will hear nothing more *from me*, but I shall remain till my last breath
your unhappy GUSTAV

He mailed the letter himself, and then felt the need of a long walk. When he returned home, he went to his mother and said to her without any preface: "It is done. No one will stand between us any longer."

Frau Bruchstädt sighed deeply, and answered:

"I have prayed enough. Our Lord has had mercy upon you and me." After a short pause she added sadly: "But Fräulein Fährbach was betrothed several weeks ago."

"That shows you how little I was to her."

"But, Gustav, when a girl has been so treated! She could not go into a convent, because you deserted her."

It was painful to him to dwell upon this subject now, and he turned the conversation to his plans for the summer. His mother, too, was thoughtful, and could not immediately regain her former frankness.

The next day he experienced strangely mingled emotions. He felt anxious concerning *the effect of his letter, shame for the part*

which he had played during half a year, relief that it was at an end. For the first time in months the daily letter from Berlin did not come and he was obliged to write none. He almost missed both. At any rate, this interruption of a custom rendered him fully conscious that an important era in his life had ended, and a new one was beginning. Early Thursday morning he reckoned that Paula now had his letter. Would she ever answer it? Scarcely. She could not help being too deeply offended. She had too high an opinion of herself to admit that a man whom she had not dismissed could withdraw from her. Probably, she now hated him. That was a pity. Perhaps it might help her over the crisis.

It was nearly ten o'clock, and he was preparing to go to the university when Frau Bruchstädt entered his room with a telegram. His hands trembled slightly as he opened it and read:

"Must see you. Ought not to sentence me unheard. Wire reply. PAULA."

As his mother stood before him, anxiously watching him, he handed the sheet to her.

"Don't yield!" she cried, when she had glanced over it; "this is a feint to draw you into her snare again."

"Don't be so cruel, mother," pleaded Gustav. "Surely you now see that I am in earnest. The relation is broken. It will not be renewed. But I cannot refuse a last request from a woman who has done me no wrong."

"You are weak; she will entreat and weep, you will yield. Child, let her go. Don't answer. Or reply that what you told her you meant, and will persist in. If you go to her she'll catch you again."

"Don't be anxious, mother; I am not weak, only courteous."

"Gustav, let me write to the woman. She must let you alone."

"You cannot interfere in such a matter. Have confidence in me."

"Child, the whole story is beginning over again. God grant that I may be mistaken. But I see it coming."

"You shall see what a bad propheticess you are. Only have a little patience with me a little time."

"I cannot. The danger is too great. I cannot cope with such women."

Gustav put one arm around her and laid his hand upon her lips to prevent her uttering more angry words. As Frau Bruchstädt saw that her advice and warning were useless, she released herself and, with a sorrowful face and manner, left him.

Gustav telegraphed back to Berlin: "When you wish." He heard nothing until the afternoon of the next day, when Paula wrote very briefly that she would not ask him to come to Berlin, she did not now desire to see Cologne again; he would share her feelings, so she had decided upon Aachen. He would start Saturday evening. He must telegraph whether he would be at the rail station in Aachen at ten minutes past 10 o'clock Sunday morning. The letter was most business-like, without a tender word at the beginning or end, but traces of tears were

visible on the pages, and, when he unfolded the sheet, a violet fell out.

"Will be at the place," was Gustav's reply to the letter, and the next evening he set out for Aachen. This time his mother packed his hand-bag and accompanied him to the carriage. She embraced and kissed him as if on the eve of a long separation, and left him with the words: "May God help you, child! Remember your old mother."

Gustav had to wait several hours in Aachen before the arrival of the Berlin train. It was a repetition of the meeting at Cologne, and yet how totally different to-day was from the former time! He would have given something to be twenty-four hours earlier. Yet the experience must be undergone—it was the just punishment of his offence.

At last Paula arrived. She nodded silently when she saw him, leaned on his arm for support in descending from the car, and answered his inquiry for her health, in a forced, cool, expressionless voice: "Tolerably well." She was perhaps somewhat paler than usual, but

that might be due to the night-journey. They walked to the door of the station in silence. Not until Paula turned toward a carriage did Gustav say: "The hotel is directly before us. The distance is not a hundred paces."

They crossed the short space without exchanging a word, and a few minutes later the hotel servants left them alone in their room.

Gustav had not kissed her when they greeted each other, and did not do so now. He stood behind her while she removed her hat and outside wraps before the mirror, and still found nothing to say. Suddenly she turned to him and, drawing his letter from the pocket of her dress with a nervous gesture, asked:

"Gustav, were you able to write this?"

"I was obliged to do so," he answered in a stifled voice.

"But why, Gustav, why?"

"Do not ask, Paula. Spare me from saying things to you which must be unspeakably painful to us both."

"I cannot spare you. I wish to know your reasons. You must give them. You have no

right to condemn me to death without telling me why."

"To death! Paula! Why do you use such exaggerated forms of speech?"

"Do you call them forms of speech? You are mistaken, Gustav. Look at me. You see I am perfectly calm, I am not excited, I know exactly what I am saying. Well then, I swear to you by my children's lives, by my love for you—if I must lose you, it will be my death."

She went to the sofa, sat down in the corner, and wiped the tears from her eyes. Gustav had never seen her weep. The sight caused him keen suffering.

"Well, Gustav," she began again, as he did not answer, "why must you give me up?"

"You might guess. I have intimated it to you frequently enough."

"Your mother?"

Gustav nodded.

"What has your mother against me?"

"You have been slandered to her."

"And you did not defend me?"

"Something always clings."

"So you will sacrifice me for the sake of miserable gossip?"

"Apart from gossip, the true condition of affairs still remains, and my mother will never be reconciled to it."

"I understand," said Paula bitterly. "Your mother wants you to marry a money-bag, and will not forgive me for being poor."

"You misjudge my mother. Money is not the main thing to her. It is—your family relations."

Paula sat silent a while. Then she raised her bowed head and said in an agitated voice:

"Did you tell your mother that you loved me?"

"Child, she is inaccessible to such reasons."

"Gustav, you slander your mother. She is a woman. She has a heart. If I appear before her with you, if I kneel at her feet and say: 'Your son loves me. He calls me the happiness of his life. He cannot live without me, nor I without him. Have pity upon him and me.' Do you believe that a mother, a woman, will still remain inflexible?"

It was very difficult to parry this direct thrust. He paced up and down several steps, then drawing a chair toward the sofa and seating himself, he said:

"It is not only my mother."

She glanced up in surprise, and asked:
"What else?"

"Do not torture me, Paula; do not force me to give you pain."

"I wish to know all. You cannot wound me more than you have done already."

"Your children——"

"My children!" she vehemently exclaimed.
"They must now be an obstacle. Gustav, that is not honest. I had my children when you made my acquaintance. Then why did you love me? Why did you not keep aloof from me?"

"I did not know myself that I could not endure it. I was obliged first to experience how it affects me to have your past constantly in living form before my eyes. Your children are charming. My heart would go forth to *them* wherever I might see them. But as they

are *your* children, they never allow me to forget that you have been the wife of another."

"Think that I am a widow."

"I could never marry a widow with children."

"But if you love her?"

"Precisely because I love her. If I were indifferent to her, and wished to make a marriage of convenience, her children would not be annoying to me."

"I do not understand your feelings, Gustav. Can I help the past? Is it my fault that I did not know you sooner?"

"I certainly am not reproaching you. It is simply a fatality against which we cannot rebel."

"But if the case were reversed, I would not see an obstacle in it a moment. You will soon be thirty-three. You might have been married eight years. You might also have two children. I should consider myself happy to be a mother to the children of the man whom *I love*. They would be one bond the more to *unite me to you*."

"Paula, you are so acute; how can you say such things? It is not the same case. Paternal and maternal feelings are totally different."

"I do not perceive that."

"You cannot enter into a man's feeling."

Another pause ensued.

"Listen, Gustav." Paula again broke the silence, and her faltering voice betrayed deep emotion. "You do not know how a woman loves as I love you. I will show you. I am ready to make the greatest sacrifice for you that a mother can offer. I am ready to part from my children. I will send them back to their father. What do you say now?"

Gustav thought of the Countess von Orlamunde.*

"I can never accept this sacrifice," he answered quickly. "You would always have a longing for your little ones. Your heart would

* Countess von Orlamunde is said to have murdered *two children*, because they were an obstacle to *her second marriage*.

be only half mine. I should have robbed children of their mother, and yet not made you happy. No, Paula, that cannot be."

"Gustav, do not drive me mad. I am capable of everything. I must have you, do you hear? I must have you. You cannot marry me on account of your mother. You cannot live with me on account of my children. Gustav, I will submit to everything. Do not marry me, do not live with me, but let me be yours."

"What do you mean by that?"

"This red head has never yet humbled itself, it does so now. I have no more pride. I love you too much. I will be your love. I will go to Brussels. You shall give me an hour every day. You shall not see my children. I will be no burden upon you. You shall find with me only happiness and love. But do not abandon me."

"Paula, you rend my heart. How can I accept such a proposal? You do not know for what you declare yourself ready. Such a *relation* cannot remain secret. It is a breach

with the whole world, with all your friends, with your family."

"I need no one, if I have you."

"No, no, Paula, that is impossible. Suppose that I should die. You will remain dishonored. Return to the world will be prohibited."

"You die! That is mockery, Gustav. I have heart disease. Perhaps I have only a few months to live. In a year you will probably be rid of me. During this year let me be happy. I am begging for a last happiness for so short a time!"

Gustav silently averted his head. He felt a sort of surprise that falsehood, even in the mouth of so distinguished a dialectician, possesses so little power of conviction.

As Paula vainly waited for a word, she began again:

"I have tortured my poor brain to death to find some expedient. You reject everything I propose. Very well. I know of nothing more. Do you think of something. Propose something. I will accept everything. If only I have you."

"Paula, your excitement will not last forever. You will gradually recover from my loss. You are admired——"

"Shame, Gustav, shame!" she interrupted. "Shame on you! Do you suppose that I can ever again belong to any man? Do you think so humbly of me and of yourself? Is there any other man upon the earth for me? Is not every one else a horror, since I have loved you? And then—what respectable man would care for me now? You spoke of my honor. Do you forget that you have compromised me?"

"I have compromised you?" he cried in bewilderment.

"Who else? Every one knows that we love each other."

"But, Paula, surely it is not my fault that you revealed our secret. No one knows it from me. You have forgotten that our relation was no settled one, that we were in a period of probation——"

"It was no period of probation," she passionately interrupted. "You loved me. You

daily protested it. I could not help believing myself sure of you. If you wished to draw back, why did you write to me daily? Why did you send for me to come to Cologne? Why did you come to Berlin?"

"Did you not request it, Paula?"

"You ought not to have yielded to me. You can certainly resist me well to-day."

"Paula, you are very unjust. You now think that after my return from Magdeburg I ought to have broken off my relations with you. What would you probably have said, if I had done so?"

"I would have said to myself that you were like all other men. A woman is weak enough to throw herself at your head, you take her, and cast her aside when your fancy is over. That happens every day. I should not have reproached you, only myself. If you had not spoken of my weakness you would have fulfilled the whole duty of a respectable man. Silence was all that I had a right to expect from you."

"Your instruction comes somewhat to

late," he said, in an icy tone. "Yet I thank you for it. Only tell me one thing more. If I had acted as you say, how would you afterward have regarded this Magdeburg episode? How would you have seemed to yourself?"

"I should have tried not to think of it. If, nevertheless, it had entered my mind, I should have blushed. I would have endeavored never to meet you again. But these considerations are now useless. A lifelong love has grown out of our meeting. You have kept me for six months in a dream of bliss. You must not rudely wake me. Gustav, do you think you have a right to kill me?"

"No. But I shall not kill you."

"To live I must have you. I must."

"If you must have me, I will not fail you. But I must be convinced that I am really a necessity of life to you."

"Oh, Gustav——"

"Paula, your assurance will not suffice; you believe to-day that you cannot live without me. *Perhaps* to-morrow, or in a few weeks or months, you will see that you are mistaken

The trial must be made honestly and seriously. We will not repeat the errors of the past. We must not artfully agitate each other, and forcibly prevent time from doing its work. We will no longer write to each other, no longer meet. You will resume your usual life, go into society, amuse yourself. Only if even under such circumstances you cannot conquer your heart, if even then you still feel that you cannot live without me, I will be yours, in some way. But Paula, I know that, if you struggle honestly and seriously fulfil my conditions, you will soon feel yourself that you do not need me."

"They are hard conditions, Gustav, but they do not alarm me. Anything rather than lose you. So you will remain mine?"

She held out her hand. He clasped it hesitatingly, and replied:

"If I become convinced that I am a necessity of life to you?"

"In that case, I have no fear," she said, *clasping her arms around his neck.*

"No, Paula," he murmured, *trying to wit*

draw. "I no longer have a right to take you, since I have given you up."

Paula made no reply, but seated herself in his lap and pressed her lips to his.

CHAPTER VII.

FRAU BRUCHSTÄDT sat in her room, with eyes that showed traces of tears, when on Monday afternoon her son entered to embrace her. He had a guilty conscience. He had gone with the firm resolve to spend only the day in Aachen, returning Sunday evening, but had remained over-night and did not part from Paula until Monday morning.

His mother rose eagerly and went to meet him.

"I expected you early to-day," she said, after Gustav had kissed her.

"I know, mother dear, but I did not want to sacrifice the night for the sake of gaining a few hours."

Frau Bruchstädt looked him in the eyes. *He turned away and busied himself with his hand-bag.*

"Well?" asked Frau Bruchstädt after a pause.

"It is over," he replied, without pausing in the task of unpacking his combs and brushes.

"Are you entirely free from her?"

"I tell you, mother, that it is over. Let us say no more about the matter. Try to forget it, that you may at last find peace, you and I."

His mother made no answer, but she was not yet relieved from all anxiety. During the next few days, she watched the arrival of the mail with special attention, took the letters from the box at the door of the house herself, and scanned each one that bore a German stamp distrustfully. She examined the postmark and the address, and even smelt the letter if it seemed suspicious. For five days nothing doubtful appeared. Gustav was beginning to hope that Paula was honestly striving to crush down her love, and he punctiliously refrained from any new advance to her, though he would have been glad to know what she was now thinking and seeing, and her silence really surprised him. For, after his ex-

planation with her in Aachen, she had again become perfectly trustful and confident. Her love was as ardent as ever, and her last words at parting were: "I have your promise, Gustav, you will be mine, if I must have you," to which he answered: "But only if you really must have me."

Easter came on the following Sunday. Gustav had gone with his mother to the Bois de Cambre, to enjoy with her the fresh green of the meadows, the young leafage of the trees, and the throng of people in holiday cheerfulness. When they returned home, Frau Bruchstädt brought the afternoon mail, which, meanwhile, had arrived, from the box, glanced hastily at the four or five letters and papers which it contained, and suddenly exclaimed: "There!" handing Gustav at the same time, with an angry gesture, a letter.

Yes! Those were the familiar, large, masculine characters, the Berlin stamp, and the reacherous violet perfume.

Gustav hesitated a moment, then he resolutely opened the envelope in his mother's

presence. It did not contain a word, not even a sheet of paper, only a few lilies of the valley and daisies. Gustav, much relieved, showed them to his mother. "An innocent remembrance, that is all."

"Do you call it innocent?" said Frau Bruchstädt angrily. "The brazen woman wants to capture you again. These are the little wiles of a wanton."

"Mother, do not be so harsh. She does not deserve such names, believe me."

"Gustav, can you still defend this person? You break with her, yet she comes rushing to Aachen; you do not write to her, and yet she sends you flowers. Is that the conduct of a woman who has a vestige of pride or decency? She is a common adventuress, that's what she is."

Gustav made no reply, in order not to increase his mother's irritation. But she went on: "Well, and you? Of course you'll hurry off a letter to thank her for the trash?"

"No, mother, I shall not."

"You surely will not?"

"I promise you."

He kept his promise. He did not write. But he felt intense pity for poor Paula, who evidently was unable to sever all the ties between herself and him. Pride? No. That she did not possess. Not even self-respect. He regretted it, for he had relied strongly on her pride. It would render the sundering of the connection easier, make his rejection effectual at once. But if she endured a humiliation without resenting it, if she defended herself, if she followed him as a petitioner when he retired, to what was it due except her love? No selfish designs could now be imputed to her, since she had declared herself ready to be his without conditions. Strange power of passion, in whose flames even the most inflexible arrogance melts! Yet all this did not avail. He dared not stretch out his hand to her again, he dared not, by a tender or even pitying word, weaken her in her conflict against her own feelings.

Five more days passed,—then a letter again came from Berlin, but it did not rouse Frau

Bruchstädt's suspicion, since the address was in an unfamiliar hand. It was written by Fräulein Winter. She could no longer endure, she said in the letter, to see her dear Frau Ehrwein suffer so. She did not know what had happened, but suspected it. At any rate, she saw that no letters had come from him for a fortnight. She found Frau Ehrwein in tears whenever she went into her room, and, in reply to her questions, she had confessed that the cause of her sufferings was ardent, unconquerable longing for him. She had vainly endeavored to comfort and to cheer her. She knew positively that Frau Ehrwein would not be at peace until she had heard from him. Therefore he might send a message concerning his health to her, even if, for any reason, he did not wish to write to Frau Ehrwein.

Poor Paula! He need not deny her the comfort of a message through a third person. He replied that he was tolerably well, only it *made him* very unhappy to know that Frau Ehrwein was suffering. He thought of her

constantly and loved her madly, but there was no hope, so he must desire that time might accomplish its work of healing upon the beloved woman. If Fräulein Winter wished to write to him again, he begged her to direct to the post-office to certain initials.

When, a few days later, he went to the office to ask whether there was anything for him, he received a letter from Paula which had lain there twenty-four hours. It ran as follows:

"I have struggled with superhuman power, my Gustav; I have made desperate efforts to live without you, you will admit that. But I can hold out no longer. My heart was full to bursting, yet for a fortnight I have refrained from pouring it out to you. Now I will torture myself no longer. Why should I? The situation is now clear between us. You will not marry me, and I do not expect it. So it seems unnecessary that we should even deny ourselves the consolation of writing to express *our feelings* to each other. How do you live *without your Paula*? Has the atmosphere of *your home* become cheerful again? Have y

at least regained your mother's heart by your sacrifice? If I did not write for so long, it was principally that I might not disturb her by my letters. But why have you remained silent, you naughty man? Do you not miss me? I shall be able to utter my thoughts more freely, now that I can direct to the post-office, marked to be kept till called for. Do you love me, my Gustav? Until death your PAULA."

Gustav hastened to answer, protesting with tender reproach against the statement that he did not wish to marry her. She knew well that he had only given her up, with a heavy heart, because the obstacles were unconquerable. Concerning himself and his state of feeling he would be silent. If it was a relief to her, let her write to him calmly. Besides, he was more than ever convinced that she would gradually regain her peace of mind.

At the end of four days he again called at the post-office, and this time found two letters the first had arrived three days before. He *reproached* himself for his indifference, and *resolved* henceforth to go more frequen

This was necessary; for at first his letters were answered by return mail; then Paula sometimes felt the necessity of writing to him, even on days when she had heard nothing, and long before Whitsuntide they were again maintaining the regular daily correspondence. True, its character had changed in some degree. The key-note of his was now a deep melancholy, due to the inexorable fate which pursued their love, a melancholy which often increased to actual complaints. Then Paula used to console him, and, in spite of his renunciation, assure him of the eternity of their love. Soon little allusions to a possible change of circumstances followed. Only the weak relinquish hope before the last breath. True love is always allied with conflict. The brave man does not throw away his gun. The memory of his letter of March 24th and their meeting in Aachen, to which at first she used to allude with bitter remarks, gradually faded. Paula became cheerful again, used droll expressions and playful turns of speech, and *ustav* could scarcely doubt that she was th

same as before in every respect. She again went into society a great deal, and mentioned the gentlemen who paid her attention. She referred with special frequency to a good-looking, amusing pianist, of whom Gustav might be jealous, if he were so inclined. True, when Gustav replied that he felt a certain melancholy satisfaction in perceiving that her recovery had progressed so far, that he was not warranted in feeling jealousy, and, if another now occupied his place in her heart, he only wished that she might be happier with his successor than with him, she became extremely irritable, asked how she had deserved that he should wound her so, and covered the sheet with large tear-stains which blotted half the writing. From that time she did not allude to her successes with gentlemen. On the other hand, she described the enthusiasm which she created once as Mary Stuart, and again as Lorelei, in tableaux at the artists' festivals, sent him the newspapers, in which her *appearance* was described in flattering terms, and added to the account of her triumph th

wish that she might appear some time in a tableau with her handsome Gustav—they would make a far greater sensation together than she alone. She also had much to say about her progress as an artist. Kornemann was no longer her master. In his despair that she did not return his feelings, the poor man had married some one else; and his wife, silly little goose, in her furious jealousy, forbade him to see his old flame. Professor Geiseler was now her teacher, and she had gained by the exchange in every respect; not only because Geiseler was more famous than Kornemann, but also because, as a happy married man, with a quiver full of little children, he would probably give less cause for the gossip of evil tongues than the other. She was exhibiting with success, the critics were beginning to notice her pictures, she had even sold some of them well. How happy she could be if Gustav wished!

So the summer came, and Paula began to *make plans for travelling*. She asked Gustav *to devote his vacation, or at least a part of it.*

to her. They must spend three weeks, or even a fortnight, in August, in some secluded spot—a quiet Norwegian fjord, free from the burdensome regard for the world, living only for each other and their love. Such weeks, such days, would compensate her for much sorrow, and give her fresh courage, new power of endurance. Gustav resolutely declined this proposal. It wounded her deeply, and she complained that he did not love her. He protested that she misjudged his heart, but represented how much a long companionship would disturb the necessary self-examination which was to enable her to perceive whether or not she could live without him. Fortunately, Paula allowed herself to be easily soothed, and soon informed him that, as he was not to be had and, after all the excitements of the past year, she was less able than ever to dispense with a journey of recreation, she had determined to go for a few weeks to Warnemünde. It happened luckily that she had arranged a family settlement. She only hoped that the Mecklenburg watering-place would be very cheap, or

it might happen that she would be kept in pawn there. Would he redeem her? Gustav understood the hint, and sent her ample means for the trip. The remittance was gratefully accepted, not without an allusion to her pride, which was transformed to humility only toward him, and the remark that, since he now knew her, he would probably see in the docile submission with which she allowed him to bestow gifts upon her, the strongest proof of her love.

Gustav spent his vacation at Ostend with his mother. There were many pleasant acquaintances from the Rhine and from Berlin at the fashionable seaside resort, and it gave him little pleasure to note that apparently his entire circle of friends either knew of his affair with Paula, or at least had a vague idea that something was going on between him and her. He lived in perpetual anxiety lest some thoughtless woman's tongue should let fall an incautious word in his mother's hearing which would excite and grieve the old lady again. Fortunately, this did not occur; but when

entirely absolved of blame. Why did she so defiantly offend conventional people? Why did she so carelessly quarrel with the "great Galcoto"? Could she not guard her character with a little more solicitude? He must call her attention to this, since no one else did. He informed her in a letter, that, at Ostend, chance had thrown him into a circle which contained some of her enemies, and, beginning with cautious allusions to the slanders he had heard, he pointed out to her how necessary it was for a woman in her circumstances to reckon with the social criticism which deals not with the reality, but the appearance.

The reply to his admonition was a letter which bore more numerous and larger tear-stains than any which had been received for a long time. She knew well what was said of her. But what could she do? She was defenceless. She had no one to protect her. She stood entirely alone. The only person whose duty it was to defend her honor lived far away, and perhaps now also disowned *her*. *His* good counsel was cruel mockery.

He alone had it in his power to restore her reputation. A word from him would silence the hissing of the serpents. If she were living with him, she would commit no indiscretions. He would guide, advise, vindicate her. Under his wings she would make herself so small, she would be so quiet and happy, that gossip itself would forget her. How long would he still leave her to buffet the surges without stretching out his hand? How long would she vainly call for aid?

He was startled as he read these tear-stained lines. So this was the condition of her soul. She depended upon him, claimed him. His letter of renunciation had been written in vain. His words in Aachen had gone to the winds. He was again as firmly bound by the chain as at any time prior to the 24th of March. The more seriously he considered the situation, the more troubled he felt. The hot fever with its swift course had become a lingering disease, which might last heaven knew how long. *Formerly an end of the affair could be seen. If he was becoming doubtful, he need only*

say to himself that the appointed day, like the cock-crow of popular superstition, would drive away the ghost. Now the outcome of the matter could no longer be perceived. There was no reason that the relation might not last for years, perhaps forever. Paula certainly would not break it. Why should she? She was entirely comfortable. She lived her usual life, she sacrificed nothing, she received, she went into society, she allowed men to pay her attention, she visited watering-places, and meanwhile her whole existence was warmed and irradiated by a love in which she found recompense and happiness; and she cherished the hope of his possession, which was evidently in a fair way of being transformed into a certainty. But he was simply being ruined by this connection. It occupied his mind incessantly. It distracted his thoughts, and made him incapable of the concentration and undivided attention which scientific work required. He wasted the best portion of his time in daily *visits to the post-office and in letter-writing.* *He exhausted his resources in gifts beyond his*

means. And, worst of all, the farce of passionate love, which he had now played so long, filled him with loathing of himself. The falsehood, like a slow poison, acted upon his whole spiritual life, and made him dishonest to his mother, to himself, to the entire world. He still had enough self-perception to notice the steady degeneration of his character. He execrated the weakness which had led him to Aachen. The relation had been broken. He had permitted it to be renewed. He must now absolutely make a new effort to save himself. But how much harder it was now than in March! And could he, dared he still act as his own salvation demanded? He had said to her: "If I am a necessity of life to you, you shall have me." True, he had said it in the conviction that she would not need him to continue to live. But suppose that he was mistaken? Suppose that he should kill her by thrusting her from him? Dared he release himself at this peril? He could not dwell upon the torturing thought. He suppressed with the idea that Paula was certainly to

frivolous to feel a great grief long, if he did not keep it alive artificially. And then: had he only duties, and not rights also? Was it really base and vulgar to think a little of himself? The continuance of the relation would certainly destroy him, its rupture might only possibly kill Paula. Did not the certainty weigh more heavily in the scale than the possibility? Thus opposing forces struggled for the possession of his soul, and, amid the tumult of contending thoughts, he could not see the path which led to the desired goal of freedom.

It was Paula who, without knowing or intending to do so, suddenly threw light into the darkness, and pointed the way for his decision. On the 21st of September she wrote the following letter:

“MY WORSHIPPED GUSTAV:

“Do you know what day this is? Does the date say nothing to you? Do you remember that it is a year to-day since I first beheld *you*? What a recollection! I can still see you *standing in front of the hotel, with your hand*

some fair face turned toward us, gazing at me with a stranger's eyes and greeting your friends so warmly, me so coldly. I knew at once that I had met my fate in you, and I had but a single thought—to banish the look of indifference from your dear eyes, force them to speak to me with glances of love. This wish was soon fulfilled. But then I had another. I have it still. You know it, my dear one. And you must have it too, have it even perhaps unconsciously to yourself. We belong to each other, and vainly rebel against our destiny, when we remain parted. Consider, my Gustav; I have held myself with iron bonds, I have not asked you to come to me, I have always hoped that you would do so voluntarily, for you must miss me also, you must long for your Paula, as she longs for you. I have waited in vain. You have had the strength to live half a year without seeing me. I admire you, but I do not want you to show heroic courage in this way. You will die of renunciation and longing, and so shall I. What does this avail? Why do we torture ourselves? Why this yearning, doubting, *hoping*? I will confess something to you. Perhaps I ought not. Do you know, Gustav? I know you better than you know yourself

You are one of those natures that must be forced to their happiness. You will do nothing to attain it. You even resist when I try to lead you to it by the hand. Now I know what I must do. I will use force. I will act for you. At first it will alarm you. But when it has been done you will be grateful to me for it all your life. I have determined to give up my home here and move to Brussels. Are you startled, my Gustav? Yet you cannot prevent it. I have a right to live where I please. And when I am once living in Brussels, everything, everything will be changed. I know how I will color my life then. What do you say to it, my loved one?"

He actually felt his heart stop beating as he read these lines. He saw at a single glance the situation which would arise if Paula settled in Brussels. He would then be obliged to renounce the hope of ever being free. His sentence to lifelong imprisonment in his falsehood would be sealed. Secret destruction, public scandal, his mother's despair, would be the *inevitable* consequences of her step. To *attempt to dissuade* her from it was futile. H

knew that. Sensible reasons would make no impression. This woman, with her positive will and resolution in action, was inaccessible to sophistry. Now candor was necessary. He was driven to the wall, and must defend his life or perish. And yet — even now he believed he might still refrain from bluntness. Even now he wished to follow the surgical practice of using chloroform before the operation, and rendering the cut painless by stupefying the victim with loving words. So the next day he wrote:

MY ARDENTLY-LOVED PAULA:

“Your letter of the 19th of this month rouses me suddenly from the dream in which I have been held captive for months. We have both lost sight of reality. We have both lived in fairyland. That cannot last. You act with perfect consistency in wishing to come to Brussels. But it would be criminal on my part to let you form a decision which would mean certain ruin for us both. You have entirely forgotten the situation of affairs, which I described to you accurately six months ago. I despairingly accuse myself of permit-

ting this. Now I dare not keep silence longer, though frankness will inflict unspeakable sorrow upon myself and you. We can no longer remain in a state of 'longing, and doubt, and hope.' You say so, and I feel it. Therefore only one thing remains, the most bitter which my life can contain. I must say to you: 'Paula, you cannot belong to me, it is impossible; fate is against it.'

"When I look back, I see a single fault which weighs upon me, an inexplicable one. After Magdeburg, you had so little belief that you had permanently decided your future, that you were certainly a little surprised when you saw me take our relation so tragically. Before our visit to Cologne, you expressed positively and unequivocally the opinion that our meeting might mean the end of our relations. Until the 24th of March you were obliged to keep in view the possibility of a rupture; this was a very grave and very solemn compact.

"On the 23d and 24th of March I suffered the greatest sorrow which a human being can experience. I do not know whether I endure as much to-day as I did then. There are *angst* which a mortal cannot feel twice with the same violence. Then I wrote you the letter which I was compelled to write, which my

conscience, my judgment, my self-knowledge alike dictated. In doing so I killed a part of my life, cut off a portion of myself, impoverished and crippled the remainder of my existence; but it was done, and, since it was done from iron necessity, there can be no change.


"At that time I took upon myself the heavy sin of perhaps destroying two human beings. You cannot forgive me for it, nor can I forgive myself. Instead of being a man as I ought, I was a weak, cowardly, pitiable child. I saw only your present suffering. I did not think of the future. I had only the one idea of soothing you for the time. And so I acted and spoke in a way which created fresh delusions in your mind, urged us farther into a fatal, impossible situation. I shall forever reproach myself. I do not even attempt to offer an excuse. For I knew that we could never belong to each other, and I ought not to have allowed you to hope that this state of affairs might change.

"You one love of my life! I beseech, I implore one thing: do not seek the cause of my renunciation in yourself. It is not your traits of *character*, *nothing* that you can alter. *What separates us* is not in you, but in circumstances *which neither is responsible.*

"If I had not been cowardly and weak on the 24th of March, all would now be over. You would long ago have regained your peace of mind. I thought I was doing right. But what have I really done? We must pay horribly dearly for a few months of ecstasy. I must deal a death-blow twice instead of once, to myself as well as to you.

"Paula, I know one thing positively: we cannot become strangers to each other. We are more than blood-relations. So long as we both walk on the earth, we will desire to belong to each other in some way. You cannot be my wife. You have always rebelled against my being a brother to you. And yet that is possible and desirable. Do not reject a love and loyalty which you will scarcely find again in life, and which henceforth, without selfishness, without hope of happiness, will have only one aim: to be a shelter to your head and a staff in your hand. You need both. Why will you not permit the man who loves you more than any other, to be both as a brother?

"We have sorrowful weeks before us, but *you will live through them. You must, for you have duties in the world. You understand me.*



"Paula, curse me, detest me, despise me
only believe that I am deeply wretched.

"Ever your

"GUSTAV.

"Postscript. I cannot stop talking to you
I must add a few words. I believe it will be
well not to pain you with more letters (for
they can only pain you if they contain no
revocation, which is impossible) so long as
you are not entirely at peace. We must both
break off sweet, perilous habits. Certainly
this seems terrible at first, and we are
sure that we cannot bear it. Yet we shall
bear it, and a few months later we shall
wonder that we suffered so sorely from the
deprivation."

Warned by experience, Gustav believed that
he could plainly foresee what would happen
now. Paula would demand a meeting, try to
soften him again; but he would remain firm
and not make weak concessions. To be pre-
pared for everything, he went to the telegraph
office and arranged to have any dispatches
which came for him during the next three
days sent to the university, instead of to

home. He would not have his mother disturbed again by mysterious telegrams.

Paula must receive his letter early in the morning of September 24th. During that Thursday, Gustav was very nervous. He spent nearly the whole day in his laboratory, anxiously awaiting some tidings. But the hours passed, evening came, and nothing had arrived. He went to bed more at ease than he had been for weeks. Thank God! This time she had taken what he said as final. At last her pride had stirred. She undoubtedly felt deep grief, but apparently still greater irritation. She accepted his refusal, and no longer attempted to struggle against it. Breathing lightly and easily, like a person relieved from a heavy burden, he fell asleep.

The next day he had the feeling that the real danger was over. If she had wished to do any impulsive act, she would doubtless have executed it under the immediate impression of his letter. As the day brought no telegram, at the utmost only an epistolary thunderstorm was impending, and that would n

be too difficult to endure. He worked at home all the morning, and waited until after dinner, which Frau Bruchstädt, true to her provincial habits, served punctually at twelve, before strolling slowly to the university to see if anything was there. He entered the porter's room, but before he could ask a question, the latter gave him a telegram. Somewhat startled, Gustav opened the sheet and read:

"Arrive in Brussels 1:50. PAULA."

He almost let the paper drop out of his hand. That was impossible. How could she get from Berlin—he looked at the dispatch more closely. Now he noticed for the first time that it had not been sent from Berlin, but from Cologne, at five minutes past eight that morning. Now everything was plain. After receiving his letter, she had instantly formed her resolution, started by the evening train, and had not informed him until she reached Cologne, when it was too late for him to do anything which could prevent her from executing her plan. *It was now nearly half-past one. He had*

barely time to throw himself into a carriage, engage a room in a hotel near the Northern railway station, and hasten to the station, where he arrived only a few minutes before the hour appointed. What a dangerous, unaccountable creature this Paula was! How incalculable! How difficult to manage! What new folly would her passion probably inspire? With such a temperament one ought really to be prepared for anything. He had no time to devote himself longer to his anxious thoughts, for the train was already rolling into the station, and a few minutes after, Paula left it. As usual, she was tastefully dressed, and her luggage was as scanty as ever. She approached Gustav with a firm step, and took his arm. Her eyes were dry, and her features calm. There was no trace of excitement in her manner. She walked across the short space to the carriage by his side, a living, oppressive enigma.

When she was seated in the vehicle, she said in her musical voice, which sounded cold and steadfast:

"I suppose you were surprised, Gustav?"

"It is a crazy performance, Paula. How could you do this?"

"Very simply. When I am suffering so keenly that I cannot endure it, and I know that a railroad journey of seventeen hours will bring me healing, or at least relief, I should be very foolish not to seize the remedy."

Gustav made no answer, but looked out of the carriage-window.

After a short silence she began again:

"What strange tricks chance often plays. As I entered the station yesterday evening, whom should I see? Your friend, Friedrich Bärwald. Of course he came up to me at once, and asked: 'A night-journey? Where are you going, fair lady?' I answered evasively; he watched me closely, and did not stir from my side. I could not send him away, and time pressed. Unless I wished to lose the train I was obliged to hasten. The professor saw me enter the office for distant places, and heard me ask for a ticket to Brussels. Then I held out my hand in farewell; he said noth-

ing, clasped it firmly for a while, shook his head, and held up his finger warningly. So much the worse."

They had reached the hotel, and Gustav led Paula to the room which he had engaged, saying a word or two to the waiter as he passed him at the door.

"Have you had anything to eat on the way?" he asked, while she was removing her wraps.

"I drank a cup of coffee in Cologne."

"Is that all?"

"That is all."

"Then it is high time for you to dine."

"I am not hungry."

"The dinner is already ordered. Here it is."

Some one knocked at the door; the waiter entered, and placed on the table on which a cloth was already spread a plate containing a dozen oysters. Paula glanced hastily at them and said:

"Very well. But that is enough. I can eat nothing more now."

"Are you sure?"

"Sure. Perhaps later."

Gustav gave the servant, who had waited, the necessary order, and the latter went out.

Bruchstädt could not yet understand Paula. She had behaved like an insane person, and she now talked as quietly and sensibly as a lawyer discussing business affairs. Between the fact of her sudden journey to Brussels, and her conduct since her arrival, lay a contrast, which at first he could not comprehend. Yet he, too, became more confident, when he saw her so calm. She sat down upon the sofa, before which the table stood, and Gustav took his place opposite.

"What is the meaning of your last letter?" she began again, still in the same composed tone.

"I think it says all that there is to say, Paula," he replied uneasily.

"What have I done that you have changed your mind so suddenly?"

"I have not changed my mind. I have merely repeated what I said six months ago."

"And your promise in Aachen?"

"What promise?"

"That you will be mine, if I must have you."

"If you cannot live without me."

"I cannot live without you and you know it."

Gustav was silent.

"Then you intend to break your word, Gustav?"

"I gave it conditionally."

"But you accepted me unconditionally. You ought not to have done it, if you doubted that you would make me yours."

"Paula," he cried, in pained surprise, "do you reproach me for that? That is not fair. You know that I withdrew, and it was you who wished it."

"You are a man. You are a conscientious man. You ought to resist. Since, after our explanation, you received me again, I ought, I could not help being convinced that you had repented of your renunciation."

Gustav hung his head.

"There is no answer to that. You are right. I have erred. I ought to have been

strong. You will never see me weak again, I promise you."

During all this time Paula had been playing with an oyster without eating it. Putting it back on the plate, she asked again:

"Then you will renounce me, Gustav?"

"No," he answered quickly. "I will remain your brother until death."

"That's very well said," she replied, without raising her voice; "but it is nonsense. We can only be to each other what we have been hitherto, or we shall be dead to each other. Do not deceive yourself, and do not try to deceive me."

"I dare not."

"Is that your final resolve?"

Gustav nodded, without looking at her.

"Then, this!" she shrieked suddenly, and dealt a terrible blow with the knife which she held in her right hand on her left wrist. It was done with such lightning-like speed that she had given three strokes, ere the horrified Gustav could reach her side at a bound and *grasp her arm*, which was raised for the fourth

time. He violently seized her hand, the fingers relaxed feebly, the blood-stained knife fell from them, she sank back upon the sofa with half-closed eyes, all her energy seemed exhausted, and the wild excitement melted into loud sobs, which made her bosom heave and wet her face with streaming tears.

Gustav took the left arm, which hung loosely by her side, and examined the wounds. The skin was cut, and there were three gashes side by side, from which slowly oozed large drops of crimson blood, trickling in slender lines along the white arm, half-way around which they formed a sort of bracelet of three narrow streaks, an ornament of rubies, Paula's favorite stones. It did not spurt out anywhere, so no artery was wounded. The bleeding must come merely from the veins in the skin, and was not dangerous. He considered the injury so slight that he took the responsibility of not summoning a doctor. It would have been very unpleasant to him, had he been obliged to call in a Brussels physician and make him *the sharer* of his secret.

He washed the wounds in the skin with the drinking-water which stood upon the table, tied his handkerchief around the wrist, and carried Paula to the bed. She submitted to everything, did not move a limb to offer the least resistance, and only wept quietly like an inconsolable child.

When Gustav had laid her down he went to the bell and rang.

"What are you going to do?" asked Paula faintly.

He made no reply.

In a few minutes the waiter appeared.

"Please get me, at the nearest drug-store, a vial of carbolic water, a small package of salicylic wadding, and a roll of linen bandages. A little accident," he added, as he saw that the waiter's eyes wandered from him to the bed in amazement. Fortunately, he did not notice the blood-stained knife on the floor.

"Shall I get these things without a prescription?" asked the waiter.

"Yes. Only go."

The man went out, and Gustav sat down by

the bed to await his return. Silence reigned for several minutes,—then Paula stretched out her right hand toward his face, and tried to stroke his cheeks. He withdrew his head.

“Look at me, Gustav,” she softly entreated.

He glanced away from her out of the window.

“Are you angry, Gustav?” she said, in a low, caressing tone.

“Yes,” he answered gruffly.

“Is it very wicked in me to love you?”

“That is no love,” “he replied harshly. “That is madness and crime. Did you not think of your children?”

“I thought only of you,” she sighed, and let her head sink back upon the pillows.

“If you thought of me, you ought not to burden my life with a memory of this kind?”

What he did not say was, that he considered her abominably inconsiderate to entangle him in an affair which, in case of an unpleasant termination, would involve him with the police and courts of justice and bring his name *into all the newspapers*, render him the sub

ject of the most disagreeable gossip, and probably make it impossible for him to hold his position in Brussels, and perhaps in any of the universities.

Paula did not guess what selfish thoughts filled his mind exclusively at this moment.

"Come, kiss me," she whispered, turning her tear-stained face to his.

He remained motionless in his chair, and said nothing.

"Gustav, do not be so cruel. What must I do to make you kind again?"

"Promise me to be sensible."

"I do promise."

"You will not begin again?"

"No."

"Upon your word?"

"Upon my word."

He bent over her and kissed her on the forehead, but she clasped his neck and sought his lips, which he did not withdraw.

The waiter came back, bringing the articles for which he had been sent. Gustav untied *the handkerchief*, and convinced himself that

the bleeding had stopped. He now bandaged the wounds carefully, almost professionally, and when he had finished, he saw to his great relief that Paula was beginning to doze. For hours she lay in a light-half-slumber, unconscious of the flight of time, frequently opening her eyes, smiling mournfully at him, and falling asleep again. Gustav sat patiently beside the bed all the time, one hand resting on her head, the other clasping her right hand, following his own thoughts. He mentally lived over again the agitating scene through which he had just passed, and, shuddering, imagined the consequences which might have followed an unfortunate termination. Gradually, however these unpleasant and exciting visions faded his first indignation at the malice or thoughtlessness with which she had chosen for her desperate deed Brussels, this hotel chamber, and his presence, subsided, and there remained only the one great fact that this woman had sought to kill herself out of love for him. Deep compassion for the poor sufferer awoke in his heart, which increased almost to

tenderness, as he saw her lying there, pale and beautiful, with an expression of suffering resting on her lips, often uttering heavy sighs in her light slumber.

Darkness gradually gathered. Gustav loosed Paula's hand and drew out his watch; it was half-past six. Paula, roused by the movement, sat up in bed. Gustav rose also from his chair and stretched his limbs, which ached from their long immobility.

"How do you feel, child?" he asked.

"Pleasantly rested, my dearest."

"It has grown late. I must go."

"You will not leave me?" she asked, pouting.

"Yes, child, or there will be great anxiety at home. I am expected at supper."

"But you will come back presently?"

"As soon as I have laid down my fork. Meanwhile, you will eat also, will you not?"

"Alone?"

"Unfortunately, that cannot be helped. There, child. Farewell. I'll soon see you *again*." He kissed her, and, for a moment,

with closed eyes, she leaned her head to his breast.

"Then I can go without anxiety, may I? You have given me your promise,"

"It is not a man's word, it is true, but I will keep it," she replied, with a mournful smile.

Gustav really did return in less than an hour, for, notwithstanding her promise, he had no peace so long as he knew that she was alone in the hotel chamber.

He found Paula sitting on the sofa. The room was filled with the violet perfume. A glance around showed that she had employed the time in thoroughly bathing and dressing and had done ample justice to the meal ordered.

"How do you feel, Paula?" he asked, after he had kissed her.

"Very well, Gustav. Can we go out a little while now?"

He looked at her, but quickly suppressed any air of surprise. Yet the line from Faust "*Tears gush, the earth has me again.*" came

to his memory and, for the first time in seven hours, he drew a long breath of relief.

"Where do you want to go?"

"I should like to see something of Brussels. You probably know what you can show me in the evening."

He took her to the Grand Place—where, in the vivid electric light, the Gothic architecture of the superb Hôtel de Ville looked like some unreal stage-scene with the projections unduly white and the shadows too black—and to St. Hubert's Gallery.

Paula showed the keenest interest in every thing she saw, evinced a childish pleasure in hearing French spoken around her, and stopped at every shop. The show-window of a milliner attracted her so strongly, that she could not resist the temptation of going in and trying on the charming little bonnets which had lured her. The saleswoman was skilful and obliging, and uttered exclamations of admiration whenever Paula placed one of her *works of art* on her red-gold hair. A small *toque of ruby beads, with a plain gold torsade*

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specially pleased her fancy. She inquired the price. When she heard 125 francs, and Gustav, in reply to her question, explained that it was 100 marks,* she was startled, and hastily left the shop, followed by the saleswoman with looks of offended dignity and profound contempt. "Things are three times as dear here as they are in Berlin," said Paula outside. Thanks to her commissions, Gustav had often made this discovery within the past year.

Paula seemed tireless and indefatigable. She wanted to see still more of Brussels. She asked to go into the Operetta Theatre, whose entrance is in the St. Hubert Gallery. Gustav refused. She was making too great a demand upon her strength, and, after the long railway journey and the excitement of the day, she required rest. After some little reluctance, she yielded. On the return to the hotel, Gustav asked the question which he had had on his tongue for the past two hours.

"When did you tell them that you would *return home?*"

* About twenty-five dollars.

"I did not name any time. I did not expect to return alive," she answered softly.

He pressed her arm to intimate both that he understood her and that she must not revert to the subject again.

"When do you intend to go now?"

"Are you in such a hurry to get rid of me?"

"Paula, why are you malicious? It must be discussed. You cannot travel to-night. You must sleep. There is an excellent train for you early to-morrow morning. You start in the morning, and reach Berlin about half-past ten."

"At what time does it leave?"

"Five minutes past six."

"What are you thinking of?" she cried, with droll horror. "That's far too early for me."

"Then a train goes at 1:35 in the afternoon. By that you will reach Berlin at eight the next day."

"I don't want to get to Berlin in the morning."

"Very well, then there is only the evening."

train at 11:10, the one which brought me to you last winter."

"Well, I'll use that. Then I will have you one whole day more. Who knows whether it will not be the last which I shall spend with you."

They had reached the hotel. He raised her hand to his lips, pressed a long kiss upon it, and said: "Good-night, my dearest."

She looked at him in surprise. "Are you not coming up with me?"

"No," he answered firmly.

She fixed her large blue eyes on him a long time,—he returned the gaze steadily. Then she bowed her head, said sorrowfully: "Good-night then, you cruel man," turned away, and slowly ascended the stairs to her room.

The next morning he did not appear too early. It was after ten o'clock when he entered Paula's room. She was still sitting in her dressing-gown, with her hair unbound, *complained* of a headache, and said that it *would do her good* to be in the air a short

time. Gustav put on a fresh bandage, to which she silently submitted, and again assured himself that the injuries were slight. He could give her the pleasant news that he would be at liberty all day, and could devote himself to her until the time of her departure. He took her first to the Royal Museum, and then was going to show her the Wiertz Museum, but she declared that she had seen plenty of pictures. Then they made an excursion to Braine l'Allend, and to the battlefield of Waterloo, and the trip in the railroad and the drive in the carriage afforded her great pleasure. She was gay and animated all day long, and seemed to have entirely forgotten what brought her to Brussels. She barely paused an instant in her merry chat about incidents in Berlin when her glance unexpectedly fell upon her bandaged left wrist. She made Gustav think of a brave soldier who, after fighting with complete scorn of death, and firing his last cartridge, sees the impossibility of farther resistance, and, with the peace of a good conscience, and the consciousness

having fulfilled all the rules of war, lays down his arms.

Not until the evening, after they had had supper together and returned to the hotel, did she say, seating herself in his lap, and tenderly stroking his hair:

"Gustav, you ought to have sent me away yesterday evening. You were so sweet to-day it will be much harder now for me to leave you."

"Do not let us tear our wounds open again, my Paula," pleaded Gustav.

"You are right, my darling. You are doubly right. I am talking nonsense. On the contrary, I am infinitely grateful to you for this day. I had resolved to die. This day has given me strength and courage to live on. Now I know that you love me, and will not cease to do so. I shall take with me a memory on which I will exist."

Gustav kissed her, and she remained silent for a time, gazing dreamily into vacancy. *Then she began again:*

"Gustav, you shall see of what a loving

man's heart is capable. I don't wish you to be troubled. I desire you to regain your peace of mind and your pleasure in work. I release you. Be happy without me."

"Oh, Paula, you know that is impossible."

"Yes, I do know it. But you shall at least be calm, if you cannot be happy. One thing I still say: I shall remain yours. If you are ever sorrowful, if you ever long for a human being who will understand, cheer, love you, come to me or summon me. Here is one heart which is yours, now and twenty years hence."

She said this very softly, her voice trembled, and her large blue eyes were dimmed by tears. Gustav kissed her hand. He was sincerely touched. At this moment he asked himself whether, after all, he had not perhaps really loved her. Her sorrowful renunciation made a far deeper impression upon him than her vehemence the day before.

"One thing more," Paula added, after a pause. "What shall we do with Professor *Bärwald*? He knows that I went to Brussels

He will, of course, learn that I have broken with you. We must give him some kind of an explanation."

"Have no anxiety, Paula. I will write to him; I will confess that we have passed through a severe crisis. I will beg him to look after you daily until you are completely cured." He uttered the words slowly, and in a lower voice: "Thus I shall have frequent news of you, for you will not wish to write to me yet."

"That is, you don't wish to write to me?"

"I think it will be better for us both if, at first, we do not excite ourselves with letters. Later, when we have obtained peace of mind, we shall again find the way to each other."

"Perhaps you are right," she said, after a brief pause of reflection.

When he had taken her to the railway station, he turned to go to the office.

"What are you doing?" asked Paula.

"I must get you a ticket."

"I have a return ticket," she said frankly.

"Indeed!" he contented himself with answering. But a world of thoughts passed

through his brain. The tender emotions which he had just experienced had vanished, and Paula perceived, with some little surprise, how frank and careless was his farewell, when he had just seemed so gentle and loving.

Now there still remained the duty of writing the promised letter to Bärwald. He undertook this extremely disagreeable task the following day. Paula herself, he began, had initiated him into the commencement of their romance by showing him his letters; the accident that took him to the station when she set out on her journey to Brussels had made him a witness of the last chapter. Meanwhile, much of the story must remain incomprehensible to him. At their first personal interview he would clear away the darkness. Now, he could say only this: he had found himself in a torturing position which, for a year, had exerted a destructive influence upon his life. For a long time it was impossible to make any alteration in it because he had felt compelled to show consideration for a loving, trusting heart. But, finally, the relations grew intoler-

able, and he had told Paula frankly that their connection must end. This almost produced a catastrophe. Gustav briefly related the scene in the hotel, and added that she had returned to Berlin, he believed, quieted, but her disposition was so variable, that it would be a great comfort to him if Bärwald would look after the poor woman, comfort her, exhort her to be sensible, aid her by his sympathy through the sorrow of separation. He hoped that he would write how he found her in health and spirits, and he relied in this crisis upon his friendship.

Bärwald answered in a few days.

"DEAREST FRIEND,

"You will understand that it is not exactly agreeable to me to be involved in this—I will use no stronger term—very unedifying business, but my friendship for you is strong enough to induce me to do even very disagreeable things for your sake. Yet, by asking my aid, you have given me the right to be perfectly candid toward you, and you must permit me to make full use of this liberty.

Your behavior in this repulsive affair is un-

pardonable. You tell me that you do not love Frau Ehrwein, and it is only from some consideration, of which I am ignorant, that you have continued a whole year in a relation which does you little credit. Your action appears to bear witness that this is the truth, for you evidently wish to break with the lady. Yet, if this is your intention, how is it to be understood that you were continually singing to her, like a tenor, your ardent, eternal love? I have read your last letter to Frau Ehrwein. She showed it to me. It is incomprehensible how you could write such an epistle. First you break with her, and then whimper for pages over your despair at losing her! Don't tell me, by way of apology, that this was the sugar with which you wished to hide the bitter pill. When so small an amount of bitter is wrapped in so vast a quantity of sugar, the pill can no longer act as a remedy. You assert that you wish to put an end to the relation. Do you seriously believe that you will attain that object with such a letter? The woman glances carelessly over the renunciation, and dwells only upon the vows of love and outbursts of anguish. You cannot blame her if she persuades herself that, in reality you do not wish to give her up, that you a

only wavering and struggling with yourself, and that, by a resolute step, she can again have you in her power.

"I have been obliged to do what should really have been your duty. I told the lady, without false consideration, the plain truth. I told her that you do not love her, and certainly will not marry her. She did not believe me. She knew better. Then I showed her your letter to me. That certainly convinced her, or at least it proved that you used a totally different tone to me from the one you adopted to her. The truth, as it always does, worked wonders. Frau Ehrwein instantly had done with you. She no longer sighed, she was no longer downcast, only somewhat bitter, for which I cannot blame her. She will also soon recover from this also,—that is, if you do not again disturb the process of healing.

"Be a man at last; know what you want, and want it in earnest. If you love Frau Ehrwein, make an effort, and marry her. That is always more estimable than to wail and moan. But if, as you tell me and as I believe, you do not love her, don't feign the contrary, but confess *your real feelings*. Then you will see how *marvellously simple* is the situation which *appears to you so complicated*. Frau Ehrwein

will be cured of her love, as she is already healed physically of her slight wounds, and you will be free from all molestation.

"So, don't spoil the good I have accomplished; don't write to the lady again that you love her madly and suffer beyond human endurance,—and be assured that her peace of mind is only a question of a short time.

"Do not take offence that I have told you the truth plainly. You needed the example.

"In constant fidelity, your old friend,

"FRIEDRICH."

The letter was harsh, but Gustav could only bow his head and confess that he had deserved it. That Paula now believed him at least double-tongued was painful, yet it took a weight from his heart to know that she was calm and well. He kept his promise, and did not write to her. She, too, was silent, and he only learned from Bärwald that she was completely her former self again, that she painted, jested, paid and received visits, and went once more into society. Several weeks elapsed, and *he could scarcely doubt longer that she had conquered her grief, when Bärwald wrote the*

on Christmas Eve she had given an entertainment at which she had been extravagantly gay.

New Year's Day again gave him a shock. It brought a letter from Paula. She wrote:

"MY GUSTAV!

"I am better than you. I do not allow the New Year to pass without telling you that I remember you. Otherwise the New Year would be too desolate and sorrowful for you. I can venture to write to you now, and you can answer confidently, for I am calm, and you, probably, have always been so. I want nothing more from you, I expect nothing from you, you are only a memory to me. Yet I shall not, and do not desire to, forget that I owe you the sunniest hours of my life. Let that pass——

"You deeply wronged me by disowning me to your friend Bärwald. I would have wished you to be more manly. I should have expected you to acknowledge me as proudly as I did you. But I forgive you. Your overthrow *is like that* of the Apostle Peter. You sin in *good company*. I hope, in future, that you *will no longer* be ashamed of your love."

have deserved it, and it does your heart more honor than flippancy or hypocrisy.

"I do not tell you that I love you. You need not know it. I do not even ask whether you love me. But I may feel an interest in you, and I know that you will in me. From time to time, I will tell you of myself, and you will tell me how you are faring. Your success will give me pleasure, and I hope you will be spared sorrow. So we shall yet know that we are not dead, and that the world around us is a reality.

"I warmly press your hand. Ever your
"PAULA."

He could enter into this tone without hesitation. He would gladly remain her brother, her friend. To exchange a letter with her every fortnight or three weeks was no burden. And they did not write to each other more frequently. If Paula needed a piece of advice, a little aid, she applied trustingly to him, and he hastened to assist her; for it was a satisfaction to make sacrifices for her sake. He *believed that, in this way, he atoned to himself and to her for his former falsity.* His letter

and hers were only current accounts of the incidents in their lives, and they spoke of their love at the utmost only occasionally, in delicately veiled allusions, melancholy, half transparent expressions, as parents speak of an only child whom they have lost and buried together. They devoted to it as a dear memory a sort of pious, sacred fostering, by marking the anniversaries of all their meetings, the happy as well as the sorrowful ones, with gifts of flowers, little poems, or at least melancholy allusions to the beautiful past. No attempt to recall the dead to life was ever made. But both maintained an aspect of quiet renunciation, behind which eternal regret and constant sorrow were scarcely concealed. True, certain tales which now and then reached Gustav's ears did not fully harmonize with the picture which he could not help obtaining from Paula's letters, but he partly did not believe the gossip, partly was disposed to bestow the most lenient judgment upon reliable accounts *of incidents* which, at least, were grave indiscretions. Poor woman! She was evidently

trying to deaden herself. She was striving to fly from him and from herself. Even if she really did have moments of recklessness, could he reproach her for it? Did he not share the blame, if she erred? Hadnot the heavy disappointment, which he had inflicted upon her great, trusting love, destroyed her moral poise and rendered her inwardly and outwardly destitute of support? If she were weak, if she sank, her fate would be an accusation against him.

For several years the regular correspondence lasted with the same warmth and familiarity. Then toward the end of September, 1889, Gustav received the following letter:

"DEAR FRIEND GUSTAV:

"I shall marry, on the 8th of October, the attorney, Herr Otto Tillius. You are the first person to whom I announce it. You will expect no comments from me. If, in future, I address you more formally, and do not write immediately, you will understand it. I shall remain unchanged in my constancy, and am *sure that you will not wholly forget me.*

"PAULA."

Gustav, surprised, read the letter three or four times. Ten days before she had written a very sentimental one, reminding him that the 21st of September, the day on which, five years ago, she first saw him, was the greatest festival in their calendar of love. The name of Tillius had never appeared in her letters. And in what a clever, matter-of-course manner she told him the news! He certainly would never have managed to announce his betrothal to her so cheerily and gayly. This woman was decidedly stronger than he.

Now his romance, for the first time, really came to an end. He was glad of it but his satisfaction blended with another vague feeling, not really mortification or anger, but rather a sort of faint self-mockery. Gustav was no ladies' man. In his earnest life of toil, he had never had time for what people term conquests. He possessed no museum of love mementos, and Paula's letters were the only ones of this kind. He opened the drawer of *his writing-desk*, where they lay neatly arranged, and which they almost filled. drew

several hap-hazard from the collection, and glanced dreamily over the lines. In each his eye fell on passages like these: "What are all other men beside you—you sweet, darling, peerless fellow? You alone are my entire world, and there is nothing for me except you." "I understand the Indian widows. If I no longer had you, I should not know what I still wanted on earth. My life begins with the day I found you. It would end with the day when I lost you." He took out the whole bundle, added the announcement of the marriage, wrapped the package in a large sheet of white paper, sealed it, and wrote on the back:



While he was painting the notes, he softly hummed the words: "*La donna e mobile qual piuma al vento.*"

CHAPTER VIII.

GUSTAV spent the Easter vacation of the year 1890 in Berlin with the Bärwalds. He desired a little counsel from the feminine delicacy of feeling of his friend's wife. Frau Tillius, since her marriage, had given letters of introduction to him to two or three people who came to Brussels, and behaved in a perfectly unembarrassed manner, as if they were still the best friends in the world. How should he treat her now? Should he leave his card at her door, perhaps call on her, or wait until his departure, and then write that, to his deep regret, he had had no time to call?

"You are really giving yourself needless anxiety, my dear Bruchstädt," was Frau Bärwald's reply. "Simply don't trouble yourself about the lady."

"That won't do. Surely I owe her civility?"

"Owe?" replied Frau Bärwald: "You owe nothing at all to a person who so abominably deceived you."

"You judge too severely. She has consoled herself, it is true. But I really cannot reproach her on that account."

"Who is talking about her marriage? I mean the affair with Hans Danewitz."

"I know nothing about it."

"Danewitz, the pianist, who was her lover directly after the visit to Magdeburg, at the very time when she told us that you were engaged to her."

"Pardon me, my dear friend, but I simply do not believe it. At the utmost, the affair can be only mere gossip."

"Very well," said Frau Bärwald quietly.

"We will get you proofs."

"That would be difficult."

"Easier than you suppose. I have read, with my own eyes, the love-letters which Danewitz at that time daily received from the lady. I'll borrow some for a day, and show *them to you.*"

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"And do you imagine that a man will give you the love-letters of a woman whom you know?"

"Danewitz? If he were asked to do so, he would give a public reading from his love-letters."

"But who is this fellow?"

"A very good-looking, very talented pianist, who has only one disagreeable failing, that of boasting of his conquests."

Gustav remained incredulous. There might certainly have been something between Paula and this Danewitz, perhaps before their love romance, perhaps after Paula's journey to Brussels, but directly after the Magdeburg convention—impossible!

When Gustav came to the breakfast-table on the second morning after this conversation, Frau Bärwald silently pushed several letters toward him. He examined them. There was Paula's large masculine chirography, the still lingering violet perfume, the violet stamped in the corner of the sheets of paper *which he drew from the envelopes.* And the

postmarks showed the dates of November, December, 1884, January, and February 1885. He read them—there were the same intoxicating words, which he knew so well, which she had also written to him on the same days, probably the same hours—"before going into society, I still have time to send you a thousand greetings. I suppose it costs you an effort to remember me? Is it so? Or do you love me? Say yes, dear Hans." "Did I forget nothing yesterday? Think—did I kiss your neck too? I love you, you sweet man, and when I close my eyes, in imagination I hold your head in my arms, you keep very quiet and let yourself be loved. You dear, dear, dear Hans—I hold out both hands to you, and my head and my lips—all." Gustav read one, two letters carefully, glanced hastily over a third and fourth, of the two remaining he looked only at the date; then he laughed aloud and, returning the little package to Frau Bärwald, he said:

"Now the affair is complete. There is nothing lacking."

"Well? Do you know now who your Paula is?" asked Frau Bärwald, less triumphantly than reproachfully.

"Yes," replied Gustav. After a short pause of reflection, however, he added:

"Yes, and no. I don't understand the woman. Why did she always pretend to care for me?"

"That is perfectly evident. Because she wanted to be married."

"No, my dear friend. In that case, she would have managed the matter differently."

"You mean because she threw herself at your head. She took a fancy to you, and a woman of this sort has no moral scruples. As you did not turn from her with contempt——"

"I thought that she had erred from love."

"Of course. You clung to her steadfastly. You are no drawing-room Don Juan, but a grave scholar. The experienced woman of the world instantly perceived this, and planned her method accordingly. She pretended to be *in love*, and you lords of creation always fall *into that snare*."

Gustav shook his head. "The explanation is not yet sufficient. I was no good match for her."

"But you were a match," cried Frau Bärwald somewhat impatiently, "and the woman had no choice."

"But I cannot believe that a woman like her desired marriage at any cost. Liberty must be more agreeable."

"Perhaps you do not know that, according to all the stories, her position in society was beginning to be untenable, and that her father had also withdrawn his aid. If a respectable man married her, it meant social rehabilitation, and reconciliation with her wealthy father. Then she could continue her reckless life again, even if her husband were not rich."

"Very well. But if so, how could she be so unwise as to dally at the same time with this Danewitz?"

"You don't take into account recklessness, and the audacity of a disreputable woman."

"That is true. And yet—one thing st

remains incomprehensible. The attempt at suicide. That went beyond jesting."

"Humbug, too," cried Frau Bärwald. "Just like her notorious heart disease. She weighs at least a hundred and fifty pounds now, and can out-waltz half-a-dozen lieutenants."

"No, my dear friend, I know better. The wound was clumsy, but it was dealt in earnest. We do not carry hypocrisy so far."

Bärwald, who hitherto had eaten his breakfast in silence, and read his newspaper, as if to show that the conversation was not very agreeable to him, now spoke for the first time.

"You see, my friend," he said, "human beings are not simple sums in arithmetic, but very complicated equations in algebra. Your withdrawal wounded the lady's vanity. Your resistance roused her obstinacy. She grew absorbed in the conflict. Even her deception became an imperious law to her. She was like the chamois hunter who has climbed too high. *She could not go back. She had done and said too much for that. She must move forward at the risk of breaking her neck.*"

Gustav had listened with bowed head.

"Yes. That is it," he murmured.

"But I think we have now devoted time enough to this affair," Bärwald continued.

"You are right," Frau Bärwald assented. "Perhaps our talk wounds you. I fear that you still love this woman."

"Have no anxiety on that score," replied Gustav. "That is the less likely to be the case, as I have never loved her."

"Come, come," said Frau Bärwald, smiling incredulously.

"I repeat it, I never loved her."

"I know you always told Friedrich so. But—pardon me—you asked just now why the lady feigned love for you. With far more reason, we may inquire: Why did you do it?"

"I can explain, though I can scarcely apologize for it. It was forbearance, consideration, weakness——"

"Not a touch of vanity, too?" interposed Bärwald.

"Vanity also. I can confess my sin, for "

have bitterly expiated it. I almost broke my poor mother's heart, and I fear she has never entirely recovered from the shock. I have lost a charming girl, with whom I should probably have been happy. I have almost forfeited your friendship, and completely destroyed my own self-respect. A fruitful year of my life has been ruined. And, what perhaps is the worst of all, I have trifled away faith in love itself."

"I don't perceive why that should be," said Frau Bärwald.

"Yes. I have seen that, without loving, all the words, movements, and acts, which apparently only the most ardent love inspires, can be feigned. Can you wonder then if, after the experience which I have had in my own person, I think doubtfully at the spectacle of any love—Who knows whether it is genuine? And I consider that the greatest impoverishment which any human heart can endure."

A pause followed, which Bärwald was the *first* to interrupt.

"Do you know, you ought to write out your romance."

"Why?" asked Gastav.

"To publish it."

"For heaven's sake!" cried Frau Bärwald.

"Certainly," her husband persisted. "The story is typical. It might serve as a warning to others. It has such an edifying moral: Veracity forever!"

"No," said Gustav, "no one will be made wiser by reading. It must be personally experienced."

"Apart from that consideration," Frau Bärwald eagerly interposed, "novels are written principally for women; and I hope you do not believe that you would awaken any sympathy for your hero in their hearts. They never forgive hypocrisy in love."

"That is, in the man," remarked Bärwald.

"You are perfectly right, my dear friend. It will be best to keep the affair for myself, and draw from it, solely for my own benefit, *the moral that I have been a monumental blockhead.*"

"Yes, my poor Bruchstädt," said Frau Bärgwald, smiling; "a sensible man ought to tell himself that he must necessarily be the dupe if he plays a comedy of sentiment with a woman. In that she is always his superior."

THE END.

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